THE RAPE OF BANGLA DESH

ANTHONY MASCARENHAS



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PREFACE

On 14 April 1971, I flew to Dacca on the invitation of the Ministry of Information, with a few other Pakistani journalists and cameramen. Our assignment was to report "the return of normalcy" to the East Bengal province. The deserted streets of Dacca, its flattened areas bearing the signs of fire, shuttered shops, shell holes, bullet marks and the spirals of smoke still rising in the heavy, humid air, however, told their own baleful story. Dacca was a pathetic travesty of the city I had known so well and had come to love for its liveliness and friendliness. My many friends were nowhere to be found. Some had vanished, others I was told, had "gone away." The only one I could trace with great difficulty told me in a cold voice: "Why have you come?" As I tried to mutter an explanation, he cut in with the remark, "The Pakistan, you and I knew, has ceased to exist. Let's keep it that way." Then he turned around and closed the door.

In the next ten days during visits to the Headquarters of the 16th Pakistan Army Division at Comilla and elsewhere in East Bengal I was to get an unvarnished, chilling close-up of the campaign of genocide launched by the Pakistan army. Though my colleagues have subsequently denied it, I can truthfully say that most of us were appalled by what we saw. I, for one, could not take it. What I saw in East Bengal was to me more outrageous than anything I had read about the inhuman acts of Hitler and the Nazis. This was happening to my own people. I knew I had to tell the world about the agony of East Bengal or forever carry within myself the agonizing guilt of acquiescence.

With this determination I flew out to London in the third week of May to give the news to the *Sunday Times*. It was not without some trepidation. I had been too long a journalist not to know that a relative "outsider" such as I was even with

the biggest story in the world could be indefinitely knocking on the doors of Fleet Street. It was not so with the *Sunday Times*. I was heard, accepted, and ready to go back to Pakistan to bring out my wife and children within 40 minutes of my first entering Thomson House. Words cannot fully express my admiration for the journalistic instincts and ability of Harold Evans, a great Editor of a great newspaper, and the others of the *Sunday Times*' Foreign Department—Frank Giles, Nicholas Carroll, Donald McCormick and Godfrey Hodgson. The rest was common knowledge when the *Sunday Times* on 13 June 1971 splashed the full story of the genocide in Pakistan.

This book is a logical corollary to that report. In telling the story of the Rape of Bangla Desh I have not gone into all the gruesome details of the atrocities on both sides, apart from correcting some misimpressions, because they are too well known. Neither have I attempted an assessment of the international forces and interests now focussed in the region because I would like to do that after a personal visit to the area. What I have tried to do is to sketch the political background to the horrifying events and to explain the motivations of the main characters in what perhaps is the greatest human tragedy known to our generation. This I have done from personal knowledge. I am sure of the facts because I have lived with them for the better part of my life. All this has brought me the odium and scorn of those who were dear to me and the many people I have known in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi. They have damned me as a traitor and a swine. I leave the final judgement to heaven. In all conscience I could only do what I have done.

Finally, I would like to say a personal word of thanks to Godfrey Hodgson and Almyer D'Souza who in their own inimitable ways have helped to make life more bearable in my new surroundings—and to Yvonne and the kids for bearing up with me.

London, 1 October 1971 ANTHONY MASCARENHAS

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To

Sebastian and his companions whose cruel death in Comilla opened my eyes and changed the course of my life

1. PROLOGUE TO DISASTER

It was about 5 P.M. on Thursday the 25th of March. The acacias and the sprawling banyan trees had begun to cast longer shadows across the road leading to Dacca airport when an unmarked black Mercedes, flying the President's standard, moved ahead of its tight military escort and came smartly to a halt on the tarmac opposite the VIP lounge of the cake-style terminal building.

Twenty yards away a special flight of Pakistan International Airlines stood ready for take-off. The green and white Boeing had a full load of fuel. Ahead of it was the long, 6,000-mile flight around the Indian peninsula and Ceylon to Karachi, the gateway of West Pakistan. Its handpicked crew, smartly turned out, were drawn stiffly to attention besides the single gangway. But, for such a privileged occasion, they were unusually grim. So were the handful of senior military officers waiting to see off the President. Everywhere one could feel

an electrifying tension, made more oppressive by the seasonally heavy, humid air. "You could have sliced it with a knife," one privileged bystander recalled with awe.

On that fateful day, Dacca airport looked like the tightly-laced front-line airfield of an alien army at war. It certainly was far removed from the civilian showpiece of the capital city of a province of 7,50,00,000 Bengalis that the tourist brochures advertised it to be. Not a single Bengali face was to be seen. Instead, there was a pervasive military presence, entirely West Pakistani.

Military sentries with guns at the ready had replaced the usual throng of visitors on the terraces of the terminal building. Scattered about the periphery of the tarmac were sandbag shelters in which tight-jawed jawans in battle dress peered intently through the sights of venomous machine guns. Behind them were the anti-aircraft batteries, their crews frozen in the classic posture of recruiting posters. It seemed that the West Pakistani army was prepared for anything. But the only intruders to be seen at the airport that day were a host of brown and gold dragon flies lazily wheeling in the slanting sunlight.

The crisis atmosphere on the airfield had somehow been translated to the lounges and the hall of the terminal building. These were crowded with more than 2,000 bedraggled men, women, and children, mostly Memon tradesmen and Pathans, who were fleeing the impending storm. Many of them had already spent several sleepless nights in the airport building which had become a shambles of baggage and bodies. They were understandably irritable. In addition to the panic, food and drinking water were in short supply.

Minutes before the President's arrival, the noise inside had been deafening as people, with outstretched fists full of money, sought to beg or to bribe—not without success—the imperious air force officers for the coveted permits that would ensure them seats on the flights to West Pakitan. Now even this clamour was hushed to a dull murmur as the airmen abruptly left desks to join colleagues at the windows. They all wanted

a glimpse of the departing President. Those who witnessed it say they will never forget that moment of departure. In many ways it marked the turning-point in Pakistan's history. Ten days earlier, the President had arrived in Dacca in a bouncy mood. Now there was an obvious despondency. And the black mood was infectious.

Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan didn't waste the time of his officers. They were at battle stations and, very correctly in the military fashion, he kept the farewell brief. He had, after all, only just ended eight gruelling hours with them in the conference room of Eastern Command Headquarters a mile away. There were a few handshakes; a quiet word with two of the big brass; a smart salute smartly returned. Then the President ambled up the gangway and took his seat on the plane.

PIA boasts of its hospitality in the air. The service on board that day couldn't have been better. Hardly had the door clicked into place when the stewardess, ignoring the formalities of take-off, came forward with a Scotch and soda for her distinguished passenger. The proferred glass was quietly taken. Minutes later, it was followed by another. President Yahya Khan had good reason to fortify himself for the trying hours ahead. The die had been cast. Caesar was crossing the Rubicon!

Two years before, almost to the very hour, champagne would have been in order. On the 25th of March 1969, Pakistan had kept another date with destiny and Gen. Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan had been celebrating his elevation to supreme power in the country. Field Marshal Ayub Khan, the aging and ailing President, had been reduced to a wreck of indecision and to retreat in the face of a countrywide upheaval against his 10 years of "guided democracy." That was the official euphemism for one-man rule.

Certainly it had been the worst crisis the country had known till then. In desperation Ayub had appealed to his power base, the army, very much the court of last resort in Pakistan. The army, however, cognisant of its prerogative of power

and its ability to redress, was also intolerant of failure. So the old Field Marshal was cast aside. The army Commander-in-Chief, Gen. Yahya Khan, moved into the driver's seat. Another link was forged in Pakistan's military chains.

The new era of military rule was hardly a solution for the fundamental issues that were rending the fabric of the nation. But as a palliative it did work. Gen. Yahya Khan was bold and decisive in that hour of crisis. With a wave of his military stick, so it seemed at that time, he was able to quell the turbulent tide.

The name of the game, however, remained the politics of power. The people, frustrated by 23 years of deprivation, clamoured for democratic expression. The army, despite its professed adherence to democratic ideals, really had no intention of relinquishing the decisive power it had come to enjoy in a dozen years. So a new crisis fermented. After two years of heady political experimentation the wheel turned full circle. Democratic hopes were again belied. The political volcano was reactivated—only this time the mistakes were beyond recall.

It was in these doleful circumstances that President Yahya Khan found himself sombrely sipping whisky instead of champagne at 30,000 feet on the second anniversary of his stewardship.

He could, of course, have found some consolation in the fact that during the preceding five weeks he had played a difficult hand rather cleverly. It had entailed a seemingly endless series of parleys with politicians he despised. The fact that the talks had failed was of no consequence. They were not intended to succeed. The purport had been purely military—the purchase of time for preparedness and the big strike. Now, even that ultimate decision was behind him.

Recalling the event, a senior air force officer said Yahya didn't want to risk being intercepted and forced down in India by the Indian air force. That would have been disastrous. So the military action in East Bengal was planned to follow the President's safe arrival in Karachi.

As soon as his plane touched down, the Director-General of Civil Aviation flashed the message to Dacca. Immediately, the order went out from Eastern Command Headquarters: SORT THEM OUT. The tanks and the trucks fanned out in Dacca and Chittagong. The guns boomed. The genocide began.

2. REASONS WHY

Does it not put you to shame that every bit of reasonable demand of East Pakistan has got to be secured from you at tremendous cost and after bitter struggle as if snatched from unwilling foreign rulers as reluctant concessions?

SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN
Our Right to Live—Dacca, February 1966

This poignant cry by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman during the course of his now famous Six-Point Declaration is a capsule history of the colonial-style relationship between West Pakistan and East Pakistan, with the latter at the receiving end during the past 24 years. It was as valid in 1948, a year after the Muslim state of Pakistan came into being and when

Sheikh Mujib himself was only a relatively unknown student, as it was on the 25th of March 1971, when the brutal military action in the eastern wing by the West Pakistan army put the seal on its eventual dismemberment.

The full details of that sorry story would fill many volumes. It is not this effort that I have undertaken. My story is to report the political farce enacted in Pakistan in recent months leading to the horror of the genocide which I had the privilege of first presenting to the world on the 13th of June in *The Sunday Times*. If in these pages I touch upon the earlier events, it is only to pencil in the frame of context for those who don't know and those who may have forgotten. Of necessity it has been capsulated.

In describing Pakistan earlier, I have deliberately used the term "Muslim state" instead of "ideological state" or "Islamic state" as the Islamabad government is wont to. I have no dispute with Islam. Rather, I have taken much pleasure, even solace, in reading the quotations from the Koran which are published daily in the Pakistani newspapers, including the one I worked for. It is this and my own experience as a reporter for 23 years in the country which underscore the confidence I have in my own definition rather than the fantasy of what is proclaimed by Islamabad. And this view is shared by 65 million Muslims of East Bengal.

Pakistan, indeed, did have an ideological basis, but it has certainly not developed into an ideological state in the accepted sense of the term. Admittedly, many people in the western part of the country proclaim: "I'm a Muslim first, a Pakistani afterwards." But I have found this to be only an emotional convenience, devoid of substance, to assuage an inner ideological hunger and to bridge the chasm that separates Islamic precept from Pakistani practice. The denial of nationality has served two other purposes. One was loosening the bonds between West Pakistan and the east as religion receded into the background in the face of painful economic disparities. The other was the psychological rejection of the non-Muslim population, particularly the sizeable (once 1,50,00,000) Hindu

community in the eastern wing as undependable, undesirable aliens. The current pogrom against the Hindus, among the others, in East Bengal can be traced to this prejudice.

Pakistan's founding father, Quaid-i-Azam (Great Leader) Mohammad Ali Jinnah, had the commendable foresight to try to instil the importance of nationality among his people. In one of his first pronouncements he told them to forget that they were Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Parsis and to think of themselves only as Pakistanis. The reason was obvious. Forty million Muslims, equivalent to half the population of Pakistan, had been left behind in the Indian portion of the divided subcontinent. Pakistan, for its part, had inherited more than 1,50,00,000 Hindus, almost all in the east. In these circumstances it would have been disastrous to further exacerbate the already inflamed communal passions resulting from the bloodbath that accompanied the partition of the Indian subcontinent. To insist "We are Muslims first, Pakistanis afterwards" cruelly jeopardized the position of these religious minorities in each country.

But Jinnah did not survive very long. The lesser men who followed him cast his wisdom aside. Their constant harping on communal themes for the purposes of power coloured the minds of the people and irrevocably put the seal on communal conflict.

Pakistan is a Muslim country just as Spain, Portugal and Eire are Catholic by the religious complexion of their population. So is Britain Protestant. Nowhere in the Pakistani constitutions written to date (apart from the fanciful lip service paid to Islam), or in the law of the land, its administrative structure or in the daily lives of the people can one find any sustainable testimony of serious ideological motivation. If the contrary were true, Pakistan would not so solidly resist the entry of Muslims from India (after all, Pakistan was intended to be a "homeland" for Indian Muslims). The world would also not be witnessing now the horror being perpetrated by a Muslim army from West Pakistan on the Bengali Muslims of the eastern part of the country.

I am reminded in this context of a statement made not long ago by the Pakistan Ambassador to Jordan when he was asked about the role of the Pakistan military unit (an anti-aircraft battalion) in that country in the clashes between the Jordanian army and the Palestinian commandos. "I assure you," the ambassador was reported as saying, "the Pakistan army shall never be guilty of firing a single shot against Muslims anywhere." It was an eminently quotable statement and received a good deal of publicity. But that was almost two years ago. I wonder what mental gymnastics that officer has had to perform to swallow the sordid events now taking place in East Bengal.

When Pakistan became an independent country in August 1947, it was created with built-in conflict. The historic upsurge of Muslims in the old British Indian empire seeking the shelter of a separate homeland against what they felt—and not without reason—to be domination by the Hindu majority, had been eminently purposeful for the division of the subcontinent. But it was not in itself sufficient to cement the disparate and geographically separated economic and cultural entities that emerged to form Pakistan after the painful surgery that marked the end of British raj in India. Not only did 1,000 miles of Indian territory stand between them, but East and West Pakistan were different in every way. The people in the west and those in the east speak and think differently; they eat and dress in their own distinctive fashions; they live different lives in entirely different environments. Even their sports are different. Football, which draws hundreds of thousands of spectators in East Bengal, has only a small following in West Pakistan. There, hockey and cricket dominate. Although there is a constant mixing within West Pakistan, the peoples of the east and the west seldom marry. The government, as a measure of integration, has for years tried to foster such "inter-wing" marriages. It has even offered a bounty of Rs 500 to each married couple. But marriages are very rare. It is a sad thing—and I have personal knowledge of this —that now even some of these isolated matches are im-

perilled by the bitter hatreds engendered by the current war.

Politically also the two wings have been on different wavelengths. West Pakistan considers itself part of the Middle East. It has always looked in that direction. And on one memorable occasion in 1958 the Pakistan cabinet formally considered a proposal by the President, then Maj-Gen. Iskander Mirza, for confederation with Afghanistan and Iran. One of the prime reasons underlying this extreme measure was to offset what was felt to be the intolerable political weight of the millions of East Bengal. For obvious reasons, this ludicrous idea had to be abandoned after preliminary soundings brought forth an unfavourable response from those countries. For its part East Bengal is very much involved with its neighbours in South-East Asia, where it finds a natural affinity. It has never been enthused by West Pakistan's international preoccupations.

Easterners and westerners also seemed to find little enjoyment in each other's company. During my three-year posting in New Delhi I saw at first hand how Bengali officers and their families in the Pakistan High Commission made more companionable relationships with Indians and others than with their own compatriots from West Pakistan although the political climate in the Indian capital would have suggested a contrary situation. It was the same in New York and Washington in 1958 and in London in 1967. In Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, you could see an identical social pattern. After hours, the Bengali officers gravitated to their own kind or to the amiable company of foreign friends. The Punjabis and other West Pakistanis went the other way. If meet they did, it was on formal occasions or on the cocktail circuit maintained by the many diplomatic missions. When a diplomat once commented on this curious state of affairs, he was told without hesitation by a Punjabi officer: "What's so strange about it. After all, we are really of different stock."

In West Pakistan nature has fostred energetic, aggressive peoples—hardy hill men and tribal farmers who have constantly to strive for a livelihood in relatively harsh conditions.

They are a world apart from the gentle, dignified Bengalis who are accustomed to the easy abundance of their delta homeland in the east. I vividly remember a remark made by a Punjabi military officer during my sojourn with the 9 Division in Comilla. Taking in with a wave of his hand the rich, black earth spreading all the way to the horizon, he exclaimed: "My God, what couldn't we do with such wonderful land." Then he added as an afterthought: "But I suppose we would have become like them."

Islam, of course, was the common factor. The 24-year history of Pakistan has, however, shown that religion makes poor binding without the resin of a common hatred. The partition of India undermined this when it obviated the ideological conflict with the Hindus—the only real basis of Indian (and Pakistani) Muslim unity. Denied this cohesive factor, the new Muslim entities began to seek separate channels of self-interest after the first flush of creation had faded. For very real reasons of survival and advancement, the more aggressive West Pakistan began to dominate the naturally prosperous and more populous east. For its own survival, East Bengal began to resist this domination. Religion took a back seat before the economic issues. The conflict began to escalate.

To counteract this trend and to keep East Bengal submissive, Pakistan's rulers repeatedly resorted for more than two decades to new infusions of religious bigotry. Whenever burning political and economic issues were raised, there was always a new wave of Islamization—the jargon for a new dose of bigotry. There was constant drumming on the old ideological hangups. Pre-independence communal enmity was enshrined in a national bias. Since Pakistan was made out to be the personification of Islam, it didn't take much sweat to equate India with once-dreaded Hindu domination.

A convenient vehicle for this purpose was found in Kashmir, a dispute kept festering since the birth of Pakistan. We had been publicly told on any number of occasions that "foreign policy emerges from the ceasefire line in Kashmir."

It has a delightful sound to Punjabi and Pathan ears because many of them have family ties with Kashmir. But it left the Bengalis cold, though it must be said that many of them did toe the official line for "patriotic reasons." But even that wore thin. Whatever may have been the motivation at the start, Kashmir has for many years assumed the function of a medium to rally the people. I have heard on good authority that the late President Kennedy once remarked to a Pakistani diplomat: "Mr Ambassador, I think your country is more concerned with the Kashmir dispute than it is with Kashmir."

If, when the state was founded, East and West Pakistan had enough religion to unite them against a common enemy, it was ultimately not enough to make them love each other or to want to live together. The leaders of Bangla Desh have said, "the compulsions of economic development were too strong to be sidetracked by the slogan of Islamic solidarity and brotherhood. It would have been unfair to think that the people of East Bengal would regard the bonds of Islam so strong that they would be expected to forget their economic exploitation and backwardness."

Rehman Sobhan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's economic adviser and perhaps the ablest economist in the new Bangla Desh establishment, has further underscored the point. "Bengal's political partnership with West Pakistan was on an ideological basis—in protest and self-defence against the exploitation by the religious majority of British India. No one ever thought that this would turn into an economic exploitation by a more developed West Pakistan. Her [East Bengal's] struggle is an attempt at survival and a protest against exploitation." (*Bangla Desh—Economic Background and Prospects.*)

As the east wing and the west wing of Pakistan drifted apart, even the common factor of Islam was blurred. This reached a point when Nawab Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani, a prominent Punjabi politician, was heard to complain: "You can see the wings, but not the bird."

Now even the wings have ceased to flap.

Seeds of Conflict

It took them [*Bengalis*] 24 *years to realise that they did not achieve independence in* 1947 *when Pakistan came into existence.*

KABIR UDDIN AHMAD
Birth of Bangla Desh

In my view they were fully justified in being dissatisfied with this state of affairs.

PRESIDENT YAHYA KHAN
Broadcast to the nation, July 28, 1969

I have been told by some of my erstwhile friends in Karachi that introspection suggests to them that the tragic events which have irrevocably rended the fabric of the country could never have been had the Muslim League remained true to the concept of its original demand. Pakistan, as a separate homeland for the Muslims of British India, had first been conceived as two independent states within one polity on either side of the Indian subcontinent. The historic Lahore Resolution of 1940, moved by a Bengali, A.K. Fazlul Huq, long regarded as the Lion of Bengal, required that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in the majority, as in the north-western and eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.

The good sense of this arrangement answered the challenges of geography. But it did not conform to the ambitions of the landlord class and the Muslim elite who dominated the League. Six years later the plurality was condemned as a clerical error and suitably amended to the singular. The seeds of inner conflict were sown. Muslim League historians will probably be wrathful of this simplification of a key moment of their history. But it is not inconsistent with the realities, and the fact remains that until the 25th of March,

1971, the overwhelming majority of the Muslims of East Bengal had been endeavouring to restore the original concept of plural states, admittedly in diluted form, as the only means of preserving the Pakistan entity.

This, in essence, was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's six-point demand. But from the start it was not intended to be. Instead, the disparate economic and cultural entities in the east and west, separated by 1,000 miles of Indian territory, were sought to be welded together by constitutional, administrative and economic contrivances. The essential ingredient, however, was equal partnership. And this was missing. The chauvinism of the West Pakistani leadership would never accept it. So the integration measures served only a centrifugal purpose.

Bengali sensitivity about the "colonialism" of West Pakistan is grounded on four major points of discontent. They are: denial of their full role in the decision-making process; denial for many years of a national status for the Bengali language; the absurd denigration of the piety of the Muslims in the east wing by those in the west; and the economic disparities which amounted to strangulation. This last is the sum of the others and will be dealt with separately. For the present I shall confine myself to a quick look at the first three causes.

No Partnership. In the eight and a half years it took to write Pakistan's first constitution there was an unceasing effort by the West Pakistani leaders to demolish the superior political influence of the numerically larger masses in East Bengal by reducing their representation in the central legislature. Admittedly, this was sometimes done under the aegis of Bengali leaders, notably Prime Ministers Khwaja Nazimuddin and Mohammad Ali Bogra. But the sad events of the 1950s show that these unfortunate men were captives of the powerful Punjabi establishment and maintained in office for political expediency.

Advancing his formula for popular representation, the first Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, proposed a bicameral legislature at the centre in which East and West Pakistan would have equal representation. The formula gave the two

wings 200 seats each in the lower house and 60 each in the upper. It also ignored the fact that the eastern region then accounted for 56 per cent of the total population. The unspoken reason underlying the idea was the presence of 1,50,00,000 Hindus in East Pakistan. It was argued that if this sizeable minority group was discounted the Muslims living in that part of the country would be fewer than those living in the western region. The Liaquat formula was stoutly resisted by East Bengal and finally abandoned when the Prime Minister was assassinated at a public meeting in Rawalpindi in circumstances not satisfactorily explained by the subsequent official inquiry.

Khwaja Nazimuddin, who was elevated to prime ministership, advanced a similar proposal in 1952, with the same reaction from the east. When he was removed from office two years later by the Punjabi establishment, which found no further use for him, a third formula was put forward by the new Prime Minister, Mohammad Ali Bogra. On the surface, the Bogra proposals, gave the desired weightage to East Bengal representation in the lower house. But this was more than offset by the complexion of the upper chamber, in which East Bengal had only minority representation. This formula suffered the fate of the other two when Mohammad Ali Bogra was in turn forced out of office.

Agreement on representation was finally reached on the basis of "parity"—equal membership for east and west in a unicameral legislature. But the price of East Bengal's concurrance was also equal representation in the administrative structure. Although the parity formula was incorporated in the 1956 and 1962 constitutions, that price was never paid. East Bengal's share of the senior administrative posts never exceeded 36 per cent, and even as late as 1969 President Yahya Khan could find on his staff only three Bengalis among 19 officers of secretary rank. Bengali representation was immeasurably less in the military services. In 1970 there was only one Bengali lieutenant-general in the Pakistan army. No Bengali has ever held an equivalent rank in the air force or navy.

This under-representation would not have been so pernicious were it not for the fact that since the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan Pakistan has been ruled by a Punjabi-dominated bureaucratic-military oligarchy. Students of contemporary politics have underscored this fact any number of times. Behind the facade of democracy, a small coterie of civil servants, officers-turned-politicians backed by the army and, lately, ambitious army officers themselves have for two decades exercised decisive power at the level of policymaking. Mohammad Ayub, Associate Professor of Pakistani Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, has quoted a study by Karl von Vorys to show that between 1947 and 1958, when Pakistan ostensibly had a parliamentary form of government, the national legislature was in session for only 338 days, or on an annual average only 30 days. In this period the legislature passed 160 laws whereas the Governor-General/President issued 376 major ordinances.

These circumstances underscore the obvious justification for Bengali resentment. It must be said to his credit that President Yahya Khan did at first attempt to undo the wrong. He scrapped the parity formula in favour of popular representation on a numerical basis. He also increased the Bengali presence in the civil services. But by then Bengali disenchantment had become pervasive in the face of economic strangulation. And President Yahya's own efforts were overtaken by the army's other more destructive action on a national level.

The Language Issue. The Bengali language has always been a prime target for West Pakistan chauvinism—and the issue got an early start. The Bengalis got their first taste of colonial practice less than a year after the creation of Pakistan. The Quaid-i-Azam, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, dogmatically declared on his one and only visit to the eastern region in February 1948 that "Urdu and Urdu alone" would be the state language of Pakistan. This insistence on Urdu was despite the fact that less than 10 per cent of the population had any knowledge of the language and that the provinces

of Pakistan, including millions of Bengalis, had their own languages.

Quaid-i-Azam's words came as a cold shower to the Bengali Muslims, whose support for Pakistan had been the fundamental factor in its success. It provoked a never-ending series of resistance movements. As the language agitation developed, student and other demonstrators were arrested. One of them was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who got his first experience of jail. Others were felled in the streets by police brutality.

This in turn gave rise to new forms of grievance. Bengali members of the Constituent Assembly were denied permission to speak in their mother tongue. When they protested, the country's Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, replied: "Pakistan is a Muslim state and it must have as its *lingua franca* the language of the Muslim nation.... It is necessary for a nation to have one language, and that language can only be Urdu."

The language agitation reached a climax in 1952 when the central government gave grudging acceptance to Bengali —with the Urdu script. Several people were killed in the resultant clashes with the police. Ultimately, the government was forced to accept the Bengali demand and the language was placed on par with Urdu and English as the official languages of the state.

Islam. Liaquat Ali Khan's assertion that Urdu was the "language of the Muslim nation" betrayed a curious ideological contortion. Arabic, not Urdu, is the language of the Koran. The anti-Muslim or non-Muslim innuendo implicit in his statement did not apply to Baluchi, Sindhi, Punjabi or Pushto spoken in the provinces of West Pakistan. It was directed solely at Bengali. There no apparent rationale for his argument, only blind prejudice.

Even the ludicrous suggestion that Bengali had a Hindu connotation because of its association with the sizeable Hindu minority of East Bengal holds no water. Punjabi is also spoken by vast numbers of Hindus, as it is by the Muslims of West

Punjab. Yet it has never been damned the way Bengali has been by the Establishment, which made no secret of its prejudice over the years.

Denigration of the piety of Bengali Muslims has also been manifest in similarly curious ways. Malik Feroze Khan Noon, the Punjabi Governor of East Bengal in 1952, was reported to have once remarked that the Bengalis were "half Muslims" and accused them of not bothering to *halal* (kosher) their chickens. This insult provoked a counterblast from the venerable Maulana Bhashani. "Have we to lift our *lungis* (loin-cloths) to prove we are Muslims?"

I found on my visit to the 9 Division Headquarters in Comilla Punjabi officers unceasingly questioning the loyalty of the Bengalis to Islam. They denounced them as Kafirs (unbelievers) and Hindus, their real sin being support of Bengali nationalism against West Pakistani domination. This denigration is an absurd travesty of the truth. Dacca, unlike any urban area of West Pakistan, can justly claim to be a city of 1,000 mosques. Even tourist posters proclaim this. I have not only found Bengali Muslims as pious as the best Muslim communities anywhere else but also perhaps a little more devoted to orthodox practice than their coreligionists in the main cities of West Pakistan.

Prohibition is enforced more rigidly in the east. Unlike any city in East Bengal, off-licence liquor shops in Islamabad, the Pakistan capital, remain open and do a brisk trade on Friday, the Muslim sabbath. Salacious films and cabaret acts which flourish in Karachi and Lahore would immediately draw irate public protest should they be displayed in Dacca or Chittagong.

In the month of Ramzan I have found the fast to be more rigidly observed by the affluent in the urban areas of East Bengal than by equivalent groups in the west wing. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman fasted every day of the lunar month despite the strenuous election campaign in November 1970. I know this from personal experience when I visited his home in the Dhanmandi suburb of Dacca. I had a vastly different experi-

ence when I visited some other political friends in Rawalpindi and Karachi the week before. I had lunch with one, drinks with another. Yet Mujib and his people have been damned as Kafirs. This gratuitous denigration of Muslim piety in East Bengal has never been an issue as such. But it did cause grievous insult and certainly was a prime factor in alienating the sensitive Bengalis.

The Economic Factor

> *... in a family, eating by one member does not fill the stomach of another. So how and with what conscience do you call us selfish for demanding our share . . . you who are not only enjoying your own share but devouring the share of your brothers also ?*
>
> SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN
> Our Right to Live

Any review of the crippling economic disparities between West and East Pakistan brings the layman, I among them, up against an overpowering mass of facts and figures—statistics trundled out with appropriate references to bulletins, study groups and the experts who first threw light on these shortcomings. I suppose there is every reason for this. After all, the expert must communicate in the currency of his expertise. For the economist what better coin than statistics?

The big issue—economic disparity—in the East-West Pakistan relationship is crowded with them. Pakistan, like many debtor nations, has always been subjected to the searching glare of American, European and Japanese concern. Understandably these countries are anxious about Pakistan's ability to meet its debt obligations. So there has always been the most detailed assessment of the economic and financial realities obtaining in Pakistan.

In recent months Bengali economists, Rehman Sobhan and

Kabir Uddin Ahmad among them, and a group of three Harvard economists, Edward S. Mason, Robert Dorfman, and Stephen A. Marlin, have separately marshalled evidence in imposing documentation of the manner in which East Bengal has been kept a colony of West Pakistan. The revelations are startling.

They include:

(1) The per capita income in West Pakistan in 1969-70 was 61 per cent higher than in East Pakistan and double what it was ten years earlier.

(2) In 1950-55 East Pakistan received only 20 per cent of development expenditure and West Pakistan 80 per cent. In 1965-70, despite the many promises of the central government, East Pakistan received only 35 per cent of development expenditure. West Pakistan got 65 per cent. This despite the fact that East Pakistan has 54 per cent of the total population.

(3) In recent years between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of all West Pakistan exports have been sold to a captive market in East Pakistan. That province has been used as a dumping ground for shoddy, highpriced goods produced by inefficient industrial units in West Pakistan.

(4) East Bengal's export surplus with the outside world has been utilized by the central government to finance the deficits of West Pakistan, resulting in a net drain of real resources from east to west. The total transfer of resources in this manner in the 20 years ending 1968-69 has been computed at Rs 31 million, or 2,100 million dollars at the open market exchange rate.

(5) Contrary to official arguments justifying a slower income growth rate for the east wing, East Pakistan has had a slower rate of population growth than West Pakistan. East Pakistan's population rose from 41 million in 1949-50 to 53 million in 1959-60 and 69 million in 1969-70, registering an annual increase of 2.9 per cent in the first decade and 3 per cent in the second. In West Pakistan population increased from 32 million in 1949-50 to 45 million in 1959-60 and 59

million in 1969-70 for an increase of 4 per cent in the first decade and 3.1 per cent in the second.

These assertions undoubtedly substantiate Awami League charges of economic strangulation and give some idea of West Pakistan's exploitation of East Bengal. But it must also be admitted that outstanding economists among the apologists for the Yahya regime, notably the President's Economic Adviser, M.M. Ahmad, have been able to produce a presentable economic picture of their own to justify the claim that the present regime has tried to turn back the tide of economic disparity. The statistical thrust and parry, however, only serves an argumentative purpose. It gives no proper idea of the immense human misery, nor does it put the painful realities in the required human frame. These are entirely on the side of the suffering people of East Bengal.

Even a casual visitor from West Pakistan, which is not by any means a land of milk and honey, is dumbfounded by the poverty he finds in East Bengal. In the 20 years I lived in Karachi I made eight visits to East Bengal. I have travelled throughout the province, down to the broad beaches of Cox's Bazar in the far south. In this period I also made more than three dozen professional and holiday trips to Rawalpindi, Lahore and Peshawar in the north, to Quetta and Ziarat in the west, and to Hyderabad and Sukkur in the adjacent Sind area. I have been to the Frontier Forces' outpost at Wana in the tribal area of the North-West Frontier and, on one memorable occasion, to Hunza and Gilgit in the snowclad Karakorams.

On my visits I travelled by air, train, car, mini-bus and, in East Bengal, by boat, making the spectacular journey down the River Meghna from Chandpur to Khulna. Looking back, I have no hesitation in saying that nowhere in West Pakistan did I find such incredible poverty as I saw in East Bengal. The Pathan tribesmen living in caves in the North-West Frontier areas near Peshawar came very close to it. So did the Hari tenant farmers of Sind where the Governor, Lt.-Gen. Rakhman Gul, was astonished to find families of eight to

ten people living on an annual "income" of six to 14 bags of wheat. While the misery of these people would shame any society, it is in terms of Pakistan confined to relatively small groups. It is hardly comparable with the unrelieved poverty of the people one finds on such an immense scale in East Bengal.

Unlike West Pakistan, the poverty in the east is manifest in equal measure in the towns and in the countryside. The wheezing cycle-rickshaw man in Dacca who sleeps in the shelter of his rickety vehicle at night and looks 40 but is probably only in his early twenties is as haggard and worn-out as the fisherman in Barisal, the dockworker in Chittagong, the farmer in the ricefields of Comilla and the man selling pineapple by the roadside in Sylhet. Malnutrition is endemic. So are tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases and stomach complaints.

Nothing like this can be seen on a comparable scale anywhere in West Pakistan. Clothing in the east consists of a lungi and a soiled or tattered vest for the men. The women make do with only a saree used to cover both breast and loins. The poorest village woman in West Pakistan would have at least three garments—salwar, kamiz and dopatta. And she would invariably wear some ornaments. In East Bengal the women wear flowers.

Food is often a single meal consisting of a pan of boiled coarse rice topped with lentils or a piece of fish. Meat and dairy products are seldom come by, whereas in the west the villager may not always get meat, but he does somehow manage a daily quota of milk or *lassi* (buttermilk).

The people of West Pakistan are undeniably poor. But they appear to live more happily than the Bengalis, who appear to be crushed by their problems. An important psychological factor, perhaps, is that in the west they have more opportunities and the hope of a better life. In East Bengal my brothers were faced with diminishing opportunities and appeared to have given up the struggle. The spectacle of vast numbers of men beaten by life is one I shall never forget.

The denial of opportunity is manifest in many ways. You find it in the scramble for jobs when several hundred college graduates have been known to apply for a post of *chaprasi*, the office boy who remains a lifelong professional. You also get a dramatic insight into East Bengal's grievance—economic strangulation—by even a casual survey of Dacca, Narayanganj, Khulna or Chittagong. The shops are full of goods—80 per cent of them from West Pakistan. You hardly notice East Bengal products on the shelves of shops in the west wing.

A striking pointer to the outrageous imbalance in trade that East Bengal suffers in its dealings with West Pakistan is the fact that the current struggle for independence in the east wing has had only a marginal effect on consumer availability in West Pakistan in terms of direct supplies from East Bengal. The main items affected are tea, matches, some brands of pharmaceuticals and newsprint. These were East Bengal's major contribution to the West Pakistan consumer market. The opposite is the current experience of people in the eastern wing, where most consumer goods are imported from West Pakistan. Hence the shortages go down the line.

Evidence of economic strangulation is also available in the profusion of West Pakistani business houses. Big business is almost exclusively West Pakistani, the tentacles of the 22 families that monopolize the wealth of Pakistan. They do the major business in East Bengal, controlling factories, tea gardens, jute presses, imports and exports, banks and insurance, even car assembly plants.

In recent years the bigger offices in Dacca have sported sizeable numbers of Bengalis at the top. But the establishments themselves remained branch or zonal offices tightly controlled by headquarters in West Pakistan, notably Karachi. Even the second line of lucrative business houses and the best shops are in West Pakistani, mostly Memon and Khoja, hands. These hardheaded businessmen, who have made Karachi their home, are only infrequently found operating in Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Lahore or other Punjab towns.

But they proliferate in Hyderabad, the Sind capital, and in almost all the cities and towns of East Bengal.

It would be unfair to deny these trading communities the rich fruit of their initiative and investment. But it is also understandable that the Bengali should complain when he finds himself constantly having to seek out "West Pakistani outsiders" for the job he wants, the clothes he wears, the goods he must buy in the market and the money he must borrow (Marwaris from Calcutta and Pathans are the moneylenders). Even the burra sahib he must see in a government office is not unusually a civil servant from the west wing or a Bihari refugee from India. And why must he always be in the position of having to salute first to this pervasive "outside" presence? Colonialism is not the word for it. A thousand statistical tables would not reflect this Bengali frustration.

3. THE GREAT BETRAYAL

Before God we tried to preserve this nation of Pakistan in spite of the oppression, neglect and servitude inflicted upon us by your rulers these 23 years. But your leaders would neither tolerate the idea of sharing power with us nor would they let go of us sufficiently to let us control our own destinies.

TAJUDDIN AHMAD
Prime Minister of Bangla Desh
17 April 1971

The crux of the present tragedy in East Bengal can be summed up in a single sentence: the Bengalis under the banner of the Awami League won the elections and for the first time were

in a position to assert themselves through the authority of state institutions; the Punjab-oriented ruling coterie which has dominated the country from 1948 would not let them and had the army to back it up.

This undoing of the democratic verdict, however outrageous it may seem, is not a new phenomenon in Pakistan. Rather, it is the culmination of a sordid sequence of denial—a repeated betrayal of popular aspirations—which in 24 years took in not only the colonization of East Bengal but also the exploitation of the masses in the West. The "great unwashed", as officers often refer to the people, served the purpose of grist for the mills of military-bureaucratic ambition—in recent times as cannon fodder. The policy has always been one of exploitation, the method an expanding dictatorship. And it got an early start.

Pakistan has never had any real tradition of democracy. Autocracy has always been the central idea of politics. This is as true of the Muslim League which spearheaded the Muslim movement during the days of the British raj as it is of the subsequent events since 1947. The Muslim League, admittedly, was a mass party in general terms because it channellized the discontent of the sizeable Muslim minority in British India. But it was dominated by and served as a foil for a landed aristocracy and an educated elite.

The aristocrats were the feudal landlords of the Punjab and Sind, the Khans of the North-West Frontier Province and the nawabs and nawabzadas of the United Provinces. The elite comprised the senior politicians of the U.P. and the shrewd barristers of Bombay, among them the towering, autocratic Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. They influenced the big decisions. They conducted the negotiations with the Congress and the departing British. They assumed and maintained a monopoly of power in the young Muslim state.

Tariq Ali has bared the true nature of the Muslim League in his book, *Pakistan—Military Rule or People's Power?*:

In the Punjab, for instance, the Muslim League govern-

ment displayed an extraordinary sense of class-consciousness when they issued a directive making it a crime for a tenant to read in "public or in private" the Muslim League manifesto of 1944 which . . . contained quite a few radical ideas. The punishment for a peasant caught in the act was ejection from the land he tilled by his local landlord. In brief, the tenant was told: Either you support your local landlord or out you go.

In the years after independence this ruling circle was compacted. Power became the preserve of the Punjabis and their second cousins the Hazara Pathans. This was manifested in a grasping bureaucracy and a group of middle-aged army officers. The officers were capitalizing on their pivotal position at the head of a service which not only had the guns but was also the only disciplined factor in a sea of discord. Not without reason have the civil service and the army been described as the two major political parties in Pakistan.

Though the support of the Bengali Muslim masses had played the decisive role in the attainment of Pakistan, Bengali leadership at the top was sharply divided, hopelessly outnumbered and rendered ineffective. Any wonder that H.S. Suhrawardy and Fazlul Haq, the two Bengali stalwarts of the Pakistan movement, found themselves out of the Muslim League and favour within the first three years of the founding of the state? In later years, Bengali second-line politicians were mercilessly used as tools for the enslavement of their own people.

It could, of course, have been different when Pakistan was starting off in high hopes and the expansive flush of an ideological upsurge. But apparently Jinnah, who had assumed the position of first Governor-General, felt it necessary to put the stamp of his own authority on the new state. Recalling his pervasive role, Alan Campbell-Johnson wrote in *Mission with Mountbatten:* "Here indeed is Pakistan's King Emperor, Archbishop of Canterbury, Speaker and Prime Minister concentrated into one formidable Quaid-i-Azam."

Not only did Jinnah make the Prime Minister and his cabinet

ineffective, he also encouraged the bureaucracy and the army to bypass the ministers and report directly to him. These precedents established the pattern of an expanding dictatorship—and disaster. Once elevated thus, the services' only ambition was to preserve power for themselves. A key figure in this process was Chaudhri Mohammad Ali, the country's first Secretary-General and later Prime Minister. He was as much a fanatical Muslim as a fanatical Punjabi and in the formative years played an elemental role in fashioning the Punjabi bureaucratic ascendancy.

It is not without significance that the heads of state in Pakistan for the past 20 years have been either civil servants turned politicians or army officers. One became Prime Minister. There was also a preponderance of these service types in key positions in the country's many "cabinets of talent"—the official jargon justifying the infamous infiltration of bureaucracy in what should rightly have been a preserve of people's representatives. The innuendo that "talent" could only be found among the bureaucratic elite and not among the rest of the 7,50,00,000 people was an unforgiveable insult. But through expert manipulation of the organs of propaganda, as we shall see later, the people were not only made to swallow the insult but also to like it.

The ascendancy of the bureaucracy increased in direct proportion to its ability to bestow patronage, and officialdom became insufferably arrogant. I shall never forget my first visit to the Dacca Club in 1951. The Tombola (Bingo) session had just ended when a tall, distinguished-looking couple walked through the door. All eyes immediately turned in that direction. Some portly industrialists rushed to "pay respects." On asking the reason for the excitement, I was told by a Bengali editor: "Oh, it's the Chief Secretary. Mr and Mrs God have come down to mingle with the mortals."

On another occasion, two multi-millionaire brothers were celebrating the marriage of their children in a luxury Karachi hotel. (Such blood marriages are common. They ensure the concentration of wealth.) The bridal group was snaking through

the 2,000 guests to the decorated dais when the arrival of the Industries Secretary was announced. Immediately, there was a commotion. Tomato juice flew in one direction, tea cups in another as my hosts scrambled to welcome the illustrious visitor. The smiles returned when a stage whisper was heard from the rear: "I see the bastards have applied for another factory."

The restaurant in Ayub Hall, the "temporary" home of the National Assembly, was more often than not more interesting than the Assembly Chamber. Clusters of people were evident every-where. But, contrary to expectation, those holding court were senior officer, not the august members of the Assembly. The way the members fawned and snapped their fingers for more coffee and cake left no doubt about their suppliant position. Sickened by their servility, my friend Mansuri remarked: "These bloody fellows have an insatiable appetite for money. When they first came to the Assembly three years ago, they rode in rickshaws and their clothes were not worth a damn. Now they drive Toyotas, and look at those suits."

When Quaid-i-Azam died in September 1948, the lesser men who succeeded him did not hesitate to emulate his autocratic manner. But while Jinnah exercised his authority with an obvious selflessness, the others had only a selfish purpose. They compounded the political rot. Crises became endemic. A quotation from the *Pakistan Times* by Tariq Ali sums up these developments:

> Every time the ruling gentry manage to reduce national affairs to a particularly unholy mess, and they do it with clocklike regularity, the cry that goes up from numerous interested quarters is not for more freedom for the people, but for less, not for greater democracy, but for greater dictatorship.

An expanding dictatorship was required for the pursuit of an amalgam of personal and provincial ambitions. The essential ingredients were: the preservation of the feudal land sys-

tem and the rich returns from agriculture, and the monopolization of the prerogatives of patronage which, in an economy based on the "social utility of greed," made fantastic fortunes for the lucky ones.

In both spheres the Punjab had a vital stake. The biggest, most influential and perhaps the best educated landlords were to be found there. Punjabis, many of them the scions of these landlord families, also constituted the backbone of the civil service and the senior officer cadre in the military services. Personal Punjabi interest inevitably assumed, club-style, the character of an aggressive Punjabi nationalism hell-bent on holding tightly the reins of power. "They won't let anyone else breathe," Suhrawardy bitterly complained at a private meeting I had with him shortly after he was toppled from prime ministership.

If these ambitions inevitably came into conflict it was essentially on a personal level. The fundamental interests of the Punjab club were not impaired. Land reform in Pakistan, including Field Marshal Ayub Khan's much-vaunted measures, remained a travesty of the term. Agricultural income has never been taxed, not even in President Yahya Khan's crisis budget in June 1971, when the government was desperately short of funds as a result of the expensive military operations in East Bengal.

Official patronage, as always, is heavily woven into the many governmental regulations, controls and permits which touch every major aspect of the common man's life. It is also noteworthy that the many hundred corrupt government officials "screened out" by both Field Marshal Ayub and Gen. Yahya Khan have by and large been allowed to retain the fruits of malfeasance. You can see them any day in the Islamabad Club in the country's capital or in the more exclusive Sind Club at Karachi, playing golf or bridge or exchanging pleasantries with the cream of Pakistani society, members of the present administration included. In few other societies would there be such a blissful acceptance of official corruption.

The conflicting personal ambitions, however, did set in

motion from time to time a political carrousel where the riders were changed but not the tune. And it was totally immune democratic practice.

It's a matter of record that every Pakistani prime minister —there were seven of them—in the eleven years of so-called parliamentary government were removed from office either violently or by military-bureaucratic fiat, not by the electoral process. The first, Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, was shot dead at a public meeting in Rawalpindi in rather curious circumstances. As mentioned earlier, his assassination was never satisfactorily explained. From time to time there were veiled suggestions that he died as a result of a "Punjabi plot." This may or may not be true, but the fact remains that his widow, the outspoken Begum Liaquat Ali Khan, and two prime ministers vainly tried to find answers to disturbing questions connected with the shooting.

Khwaja Nazimuddin, who succeeded Liaquat Ali Khan, was dismissed by the Punjabi Governor-General Ghulam Mohammad. The next prime minister, Mohammad Ali Bogra, was a political unknown summoned from the anonymity of an ambassadorial post in Washington and installed, imperial style, on the *gaddi* (throne). He had, as he told me later, a "bastardly job." He had to "reconstitute" his cabinet on threat of dismissal and, as if this humiliation was not enough, he was sent packing to his ambassadorial post a few months later. Mohammad Ali Bogra was never defeated on the floor of the House, only by the subversion of his party men.

Chaudhri Mohammad Ali, former Secretary-General turned politician and finance minister, succeeded his namesake from Bogra by a cheap political trick. The Muslim League Assembly Party was inveigled into electing him party leader on the understanding that he would immediately undertake discussions with Suhrawardy, the leader of the Awami League opposition who was expected to form a coalition government.

While Suhrawardy waited anxiously for the great moment, Chaudhri Mohammad Ali drove to the Governor-General's house and was sworn in as Prime Minister by Iskander Mirza.

He then proceeded to "give" Pakistan its first constitution. This document was based on a political compromise hammered from the Bengalis—the odious "parity formula" of representation which East Bengal was to regret bitterly for the next fourteen years.

Though a member of the inner circle, Chaudhri Mohammad Ali, proved too ambitious for his colleagues. They felt their positions threatened by a man reaching for absolute power. So he was forced out in favour of Suhrawardy, who by then had made his peace with President Mirza and the army. Suhrawardy's Awami League had only minority representation in the Assembly. As such he was a captive of the whims of President Mirza, and when he tried to assert himself the rug was rudely pulled from under him. In came I. I. Chundrigar, a Bombay barrister, to join the Mad Hatter's dance. Another figurehead, he survived just about 40 days, making way for Malik Feroze Khan Noon.

This Punjabi feudal landlord had severely damaged his reputation by inept handling of a difficult assignment as Governor of East Bengal in the early language movement. But all was forgiven in 1957 when the political convenience of the ruling group required that he make a comeback. Noon was Jubilant when called to the prime ministership. Lady Vikrunissa (Vicky) Noon, however, had grave misgivings. "I'm always worried about these big appointments," she told me an hour before her husband was sworn in, "they always seem to end in disaster. I hope it won't be the same this time."

The good lady's instincts were right. Lightning did strike again—only this time it was not a personal debacle for Noon, but a national disaster. On the 7th of October 1958, not six months before the long-awaited first general elections, the army under Gen. Mohammad Ayub Khan kicked out both the Prime Minister and the National Assembly to usher in an era of unconcealed dictatorship. The lurking monster within had finally broken out. This development ultimately proved to be its undoing. By demolishing even the facade of democracy that had been maintained for years, the military-bureaucratic

coterie brought the people face to face with their real oppressors.

For the next ten years Pakistan was to be ruled with an iron hand. Seldom has there been a more vivid demonstration of Lord Action's dictum, "absolute power corrupts absolutely." The military-bureaucratic elite, as the principal instruments of Ayub power, achieved an eminence beyond their wildest dreams. There was no check on their appetites so long as they served the regime well. Servility, sycophancy and corruption in its many forms became a national way of life. Indeed, political, professional, business and bureaucratic success was inconceivable without the necessary obeisance in the right direction and the required application of *makkhan* (butter). Never had the people been so debased.

Such are the "democratic" traditions of Pakistan.

4. A "NEW BEGINNING"

Fellow countrymen, I wish to make it absolutely clear to you that I have no ambition other than the creation of conditions conductive to the establishment of a constitutional government....

PRESIDENT YAHYA KHAN
26 March 1969

On the morning of 26 March 1969, Pakistan awoke to a new beginning—at least that's what everyone hoped it would be. Hours earlier, Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan, the paradoxical despot who had permeated national life with an overwhelming presence, had been overthrown by a popular upsurge unprecedented in the country. The history of that event is a volume in itself. It has been told elsewhere and will

undoubtedly be the subject of many more books. My purpose is served by focusing attention on the result: the apparent demolition of the political edifice so grotesquely fashioned over 22 years by the convoluted ambitions of the Punjabi-dominated bureaucratic-military elite.

In the shambles, however trite it may sound, appeared the hope of a brave new world for Pakistanis newly savouring the heady victory of an irrepressible movement. It was the people's greatest triumph to date, and not unnaturally they were in a euphoric mood. Conversely, it was the greatest disaster the tightly knit ruling classes had known. They were now in retreat. Between the two stood Gen. Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan at the pinnacle of an ambitious life. The eyes of Pakistan were on him.

The dining rooms and the lounges of the Karachi Gymkhana and the more exclusive Sind Club were more than usually crowded on that fateful afternoon as millowners, businessmen, the inevitable officials and the ten percenters gathered to chew the momentous events. There was much talk about Gen. Yahya Khan's capability. Someone spread the word that the new President's personal file in the military headquarters at Rawalpindi gave him a higher IQ rating than the ousted Field Marshal. Talk about his love of the good life lit up the faces of the representatives of big business. For 20 years they had operated on the premis that every man has a price. They had paid it willingly and recouped the investment many times over. That habit could not be changed. There was no reason to.

These jackals of the jungle feast, whose cunning and persistence allowed them to sup more lordly than the lions, had an abiding confidence in the cupidity of officialdom, both military and civil. In Pakistan's new moment of destiny their only "try", as the market jargon goes, was to find as quickly as possible a pipeline into military headquarters and the new army command. This was the shortest way to success. So they stood, hands in pockets, sipping tomato juice and buying drinks and information all round. Someone remarked

later, "Ali Baba has departed but not the 40 thieves!"

When it became known that President Yahya Khan's son was a "junior executive" in an international oil company, one moghul is said to have ambled to the telephone to breathe curt instructions to his slaves: Get him at any cost. But, it transpired later, President Yahya Khan was not to be trapped as his predecessor had been through the aegis of his son. That gentleman had risen in 12-months from Captain (retired) to a captain of industry. Gen. Yahya Khan had him temporarily kept out of the clutches of big business by arranging to have him sent abroad "for training".

There were, however, other fish to be had, among them the political leaders of the anti-Ayub movement who suddenly assumed a new prominence. The turbulent events of the past six months, when neither police brutality nor army bullets could halt the tide against Ayub, had underscored the need for broader public participation in the government. Scrapping of the parliamentary system in 1958 was now admitted to have a mistake for it brought the people face to face with their real oppressors. So it was abundantly clear that unless the establishment was to be wiped out entirely some form of "parliamentary democracy" would have to be conceded as a sop to popular demand. In these circumstances, it was acknowledged that general elections assumed a crucial importance. So did the prancing politicians. When all is said and done they would be the horses in the field.

President Yahya Khan set the tone for this popular assessment in a keynote broadcast to the nation a few hours later.

My sole aim in imposing martial law is to protect life, liberty and property of the people and put the administration back on the rails. My first and foremost task as Chief Martial Law Administrator, therefore, is to bring back sanity and ensure that the administration resumes its normal functions to the satisfaction of the people. We have had enough of administrative laxity and chaos and I shall see to it that this is not repeated in any form or manner. Let

every member of the administration take a serious note of this warning.

Fellow countrymen, I wish to make it absolutely clear to you that I have no ambition other than the creation of conditions conducive to the establishment of a constitutional government. It is my firm belief that a sound, clean and honest administration is a pre-requisite for sane and constructive political life and for the smooth transfer of power to the representatives of the people elected freely and impartially on the basis of adult franchise. It will be the task of these elected representatives to give the country a workable constitution and find a solution of all other political, economic and social problems that have been agitating the minds of the people.

The President's words obtained the desired public response. Newspapers, long practised in the chorus position, immediately went into raptures about the "new saviour", the "patriotic army" and the "victory of the masses." They printed columns of equally fulsome praise which came flooding in from every quarter, particularly from Ayub Khan's erstwhile political associates, businessmen, labour leaders, professional "students," even artists and writers who had prudently remained silent till the end. They were now only too eager to join the pack in tearing the fallen leader. It was enough to make one vomit. This spectacle was so offensive that it embarrassed the newcomers to command even though they were hungering for public support. So the word went out to the editors from the Information Ministry: no personalities; comment should be constructive, not cloying; only statements by "reputable" leaders should be published; there should be no abuse of Field Marshal Ayub Khan.

Though denied their accustomed eulogies, the newspapers had enough to bite on. After all, the new President had made a magnificient response to the public demand. Ayub's Presidential-style constitution based on indirect representation was to be scrapped. Power was to be transferred to the people's

representatives elected by adult franchise. There was to be a crackdown on the hated bureaucracy. The President's broadcast had everything—except, it transpired, sincere purpose. That was to be painfully discovered in the months ahead. But at the time even cynics were silenced by the happy public mood. It was too early for testing sincerity. The new leadership had to be given a chance, the benefit of the doubt.

In their euphoric mood the people did not realize that the struggle for democracy was far from over. They had, indeed, won a major battle—Ayub Khan and his officers and political henchmen had been sent packing—but the war was another thing. Power still lay very much in the hands of the army and its civilian advisers. Admittedly, the old guard had been swept away and the newcomers would have to be more responsive to public demand; but they were undeniably of the same stock. In practical terms, it was only another round in the interminable musical chairs that has characterized Pakistan politics since the Quaid-i-Azam died in 1948. It was a sobering thought for those who took the trouble to make a dispassionate assessment.

The overwhelming majority of the people, politicians included, were, however, too drunk with victory for this. Enough for them was the fact that Ayub Khan had been dethroned and Yahya Khan had given promise of a new beginning. They failed to realize that the new President was only repeating the promises traditionally made by military dictators the world over and that these had been universally betrayed. This was not the first time the people of Pakistan had allowed themselves to be so fooled into complacency.

Was President Yahya Khan really sincere when he made his promises on 26 March 1969?

The answers to this question have bedevilled politics in the country for more than two and a half years and are among the principal reasons for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's downfall. Those who have met the President—this includes foreign journalists, British parliamentarians, diplomats and world leaders—have been captivated by his rough, outspoken manner

and undeniable military charm. They refuse to believe there is anything very devious about him. When confronted by the horrifying realities in the country they tend to dismiss them as the wrongdoing of Yahya Khan's henchmen and hold him guilty of nothing more than ignorance and a stupid blind faith in his Machiavellian staff. There may be an element of truth in this but the assessment on the whole underrates his proven political ability. It also curiously ignores the reality of his complete dominance of the military establishment.

The President's love of the good life and his dependence on the staff system—one cynic has described it as the daily preparation of a comic book on which decisions are made—tends to mislead. Gen. Yahya Khan has always been and is very much the boss. He and he alone makes the decisions. His advisers may help with the score but they play second fiddle. It is not without reason that he has so often publicly proclaimed he is "Commander-in-Chief, Chief Martial Law Administrator and President"—in that order.

His reliance on proper staff work and a natural aversion to disturbance after hours does not preclude a close watch on everything that goes on. This is done through an intricate network of intelligence agencies and private informers. They report personally to the President. If they went wrong in key matters, notably the elections, the fault was not misinformation or bad assessment. It was the failure to influence events. As the army Commander-in-Chief, Gen. Yahya Khan keeps a firm grip on the real power in the country. All promotions in the higher echelons, senior appointments, the movement of units of the army, navy, and air force are done with his knowledge and consent. He rules the military establishment and through it the country.

To return to the question of sincerity. The President Yahya Khan had promised three things on the 26 March 1969. They were: a clean-up of the corrupt and inefficient administration; a general election on the basis of adult franchise; and transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people. My own assessment is that he was serious about the first two.

He was acutely conscious of the pitfalls that were Ayub Khan's undoing. They were dramatized by the recent political cataclysm. But he was not telling the whole truth about the third.

He did indeed make a big thing about cleansing the administration as a prelude to political reform. The civil and military investigative agencies were immediately put to digging up dirt—and dig they did with a vengeance. I remember a navel intelligence officer telling me: "You can't turn over a stone without finding some filthy rat." Referring to a socially prominent senior officer in the navy, he said the dossier on that officer "almost touches the ceiling and is still growing."

But all the good work came to naught when the regime realized that corruption had reached such phenomenal proportions during Ayub Khan's "decade of reforms" that any honest cleansing would entail the almost total replacement of the civil administration and of vast numbers in the military establishment. So it decided that action would be limited to the civil service, and only the big ones who had made a more shocking display of malfeasance. These were accordingly screened out or "three-o-threed" (the number of dismissed officers corresponded to the bore of the military rifle, much to the delight of political cartoonists).

The military types, including the socially prominent navy officer, went their merry way untouched. Having compromised in this matter, it was inevitable that Yahya Khan should close his eyes to the reinfection of the administration to the point where corruption is as rampant as it was in the last days of the Ayub regime. So much for the first promise.

With regard to general election, the event of the previous six months had underscored the need for radical reform of at least the outward manifestations of the system of government. As pointed out earlier, scrapping the so-called parliamentary government in 1958 had been a costly mistake. The facade of democracy had, if nothing else, been somewhat emotionally satisfying to the people, deluded by visions of representation. Its removal brought them face to face with

their real oppressors. So it was clear to the new regime that some form of parliamentary procedure would have to be restored and the people given a more substantial say in day-to-day affairs if the political cataclysm of 1968-69 was not to be treated.

The fact that there had been no general elections in the country in the 23 years of its existence was also an unacceptable anomaly for the people. For the government it was a potential source of the most grave trouble. Yahya Khan therefore astutely decided on elections. I am convinced of his sincerity in this matter. But the objective and third promise, the transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people, was entirely another thing. Here I am sure the President was nowhere as sincere as his words suggested.

Yahya Khan knew perhaps better than most others that the army had come to stay, and as such he must secure his own position. Consequently, his actions were so motivated. He would be liberal with patronage and magnanimously hand out the trappings and ceremonials of authority to those who would have them, but he would not abdicate. I warned my colleagues about this and would have collected on bets had I not chosen to leave the country. Events have made clear that the President intended not the real transfer of power to the people through their elected representatives but the delegation of some authority to a civilian government with himself backed by the army, holding the whip hand.

His strategy was explained to me by an army friend. "Yahya Khan," he said, "is no fool. He will rather drive comfortably than struggle with pulling the cart. That he will get the donkeys to do for him. You'll see him bring out enough carrots to make them jump." That was in July 1969. By then the euphoria had begun to fade, and it was beginning to dawn on some people that although the centre and the provinces would have their assemblies and popular governments, decisive power would remain with Yahya Khan and the military establishment. No constitution would be acceptable to them if it did not conform to this pattern. I have been told on good autho-

rity that there was from the start an understanding to this effect at army headquarters in Rawalpindi. The excuse, as usual, was the "national interest."

The President, could of course, justify such a dispensation and salve his conscience by borrowing the perverted altruism of his predecessors in office. It had been dinned into the people for 22 years that the politicians were perfidious, that the army had an "inherent responsibility greater than any constitution" and that the people must be protected against their own excesses. Black is black and while is not so black. In time, even the authors of this calumny had come to believe in it. Gen. Yahya Khan, an unvarnished product of this convoluted society, was not immune to such mental contortions. So when he promised the transfer of power he really meant the transfer of power with what he assumed were the accepted reservations. Apparently, there was no doubt in his mind about this. The misunderstanding was elsewhere. The promises were made because they had to be made—or the new regime would not have lasted long. There was time enough later to shade the meanings appropriately. Thus the "new beginning" reverted to the old forms. Another betrayal was just a step away.

5. PRE-ELECTION FIDDLE

. . . there is no likelihood of any one single party emerging either from West or East Pakistan.

. . . there is no question of East Pakistan members forming one single group in confrontation—if that comes then it means the state has come to an end . . .

PROF G.W. CHOUDHURY, unofficial constitutional adviser to President Yahya Khan, London, 10 September 1970

There is no doubt whatsoever that from the start Gen. Yahya Khan did not intend to abdicate or, as he promised, to transfer power to the people. The question in April 1969 was how to do it without giving noticeable public offence. The lessons of

Ayub Khan's downfall had been well taken. Dictatorship could not be flaunted. General elections, unpalatable as they were, must necessarily be swallowed. The country would not for long tolerate further denial. Nor would it accept a repetition of the farcical exercises that past elections had been. In this matter it was vital that justice must seem to be done to the people.

So the President was apparently convinced that the technique this time would have to be a covert manipulation of the reins behind a facade of democracy. It would serve as a buffer against public protest and give the regime the required legitimacy. So within weeks of coming to power, Yahya Khan began shopping around for ideas to achieve his purpose.

It is a measure of his political acumen that he soon hit upon a plan that could win public acceptance and apparently assure his grip on effective power. It was an astonishingly simple formula. In essence, it postulated that since for PR reasons the regime could not tamper too closely with the elections, it could predetermine within acceptable limits the pattern for a new constitution which would leave Yahya Khan's own position untouched. The goat would be slaughtered after the feast when it least expected.

The plan sought to make capital of public gullibility and the endemic political discord and compulsive internecine war among the politicians. Yahya Khan was convinced that the electorate, giving an opportunity to express itself fully, would never unite behind a single party. Rather, it would vote into the assembly in substantial and antipathetic groups which could be manipulated in the desired direction. He could then confidently fiddle a constitution through an assembly deadlocked by discord. If he could ensure this deadlock, he would be safe and riding high.

Gen. Yahya Khan had good reason to be confident of success. Although the country and its politicians had united to bring down Ayub Khan, it had shown itself incapable of agreeing to an alternative system of government. That, in the first place, is why he had stepped into Ayub Khan's shoes so easily.

The causative factor of the country's unrest has been detailed in earlier references to the expanding ambition of the Punjabi-dominated ruling elite. It had kept the country stirred up by interminably kaleidoscoping political patterns. But the politicians were not devoid of blame. They would not have been so unscrupulously used by the entrenched bureaucratic-military combine had they shown themselves either unwilling or less complaisant. They were neither. Cupidity chained them to the missionary position.

Consequently, political parties were made and unmade with extreme casualness. These "parties" sometimes had the reality of only three members: the aspirant as chairman, his office boy as secretary, and a rich uncle as treasurer. On one memorable occasion the "founder" of a fanciful political movement had the embarrassment of being denied a slot in its hierarchy. Unabashed, he simply turned another way and a few months later "founded" a new movement. The prospect of elections only served to hasten the process of fragmentation. In 1969 there were 36 political parties and "groups" waiting for the election signal to start another free for all. Not unnaturally, Gen. Yahya Khan saw in these circumstances a convenient opportunity to fiddle his objective.

When he embarked on his adventure he did not foresee that East Bengal's economic and political grievances, arising from two decades of colonial exploitation, would assume the proportions of a tidal wave during the elections. That event would make an unholy mess of the fundamental presumption of disunity on which his coup was based. Realization would come after the event, and his unrelenting ambition would then force him into even more grievous error. At the moment the chips were falling into place remarkably well and political experience urged Yahya Khan to plunge. The gambit was accordingly launched with confidence and verve.

On 28 November 1969, the President went on the radio-TV national hookup to make a long and much-publicized speech. For seven months he had been watching political developments and talking to leaders and now desired to take

the nation into his confidence, he said. He was sorry to report he had found no "formal consensus" on the major constitutional issues. Nevertheless, he claimed to be "fully aware of the views that various people hold on these important matters." As such he felt obliged to give expression to his personal assessment of the popular will with a series of important measures.

First, the President said, he had found it necessary to facilitate the projected first general election with an enabling "legal framework." This would be announced later. Secondly, he had found "no disagreement" on constitutional issues such as the parliamentary form of federal government, direct adult franchise, fundamental rights of citizens and their enforcement by law courts, the independence of the judiciary and the "Islamic character" of the constitution. Yahya Khan therefore decided that these should be "considered as settled" for purposes of the new constitution.

Thirdly, again as a purely enabling measure, he thought it fit to resolve two of what he said were the three remaining constitutional issues. One of these was dismemberment of One Unit (the integrated province of West Pakistan) into its constituent parts—the separate provinces of Sind, Punjab, Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier. The other was "parity" or the formula for equal representation of East Pakistan. Accordingly, he announced that the provinces of Sind, Punjab, Baluchistan and NEFP would immediately be restored and the principle of "one man one vote" be substituted for parity in the forthcoming elections and as part of the new constitution.

Having been so accommodating, the President could have resolved the third and perhaps most prickly issue: the relationship between the central government and the provinces. The country would then have had a ready-made constitution. But he rather magnanimously decided to leave this issue to the national assembly to deal with "in such manner as would satisfy the legitimate requirements and demands of the provinces as well as the vital requirements of the nation as a whole."

Yahya Khan went on to announce the time table for the "changeover of power to the elected representative of the people." Its sequence: political activity would be resumed on 1 January 1970. The Legal Framework Order would be ready by 31 March, the new electoral rolls by June. General elections to the national assembly would be held on 5 October 1970. The new assembly would have a deadline of 120 days to frame the constitution, failing which it would stand dissolved. The provincial elections would be held after the constitution task had been accomplished.

Yahya Khan did not specifically say so, but the enthralled people were left by quick mental calculation with the distinct impression that by March or April 1971 or in about 18 months time they would for the first time be masters of their own destiny. The President's broadcast, like his earlier pronouncement in March, was carefully tailored to please. It got the desired response.

The integration of West Pakistan in 1955, when one Unit was created to bolster Punjabi ambitions, was a running score for the rest of the region. For 14 years the Sindhis, Baluchis and Pathans had bitterly opposed Punjabi domination of the unified provincial structure. Its abrupt dismemberment by Yahya Khan before the election was therefore wildly applauded in most areas of West Pakistan.

For its part, East Bengal was supremely satisfied that the President had gratituously put an end to the tyranny of parity. The principle of "one man one vote" he introduced gave the province its full share of political representation as the home of the major portion of the country's population. This unexpected bonus was loudly cheered. Both East and West Pakistan were jubilant that a firm date had at last been fixed for the general elections and the expected transfer of power.

The exultant people did not seem to be overly concerned about the curtailment of the assembly's constitution-making decisions by Yahya Khan's delineation of "settled issues." Nor were they unduly suspicious of the "legal framework" which had been so innocuously introduced by the President,

or of the stipulation that the constitution would have to be written in 120 days. Decisions on voting procedures of the new assembly and the nettlesome issue of provincial autonomy would indeed be serious obstacles to a quick completion of the task of constitution-making by the assembly even if, as expected it was composed of many small political groups. The people were immensely satisfied by the dismantling of One Unit and by the "one man one vote" form of representation. They were also filled with the heady prospect of the transfer of power and not unnaturally assumed there would be speedy compromise on these issues. Yahya Khan had chosen his carrots well and had cleverly hidden the whip in his other hand.

The crunch was felt four months later when the details of the Legal Framework Order were made public. By a curious coincidence it happened on April Fools' Day. In Pakistan they could be had by the million.

The Legal Framework Order (LFO) left no doubt about Yahya Khan's intentions.

Article 25 specified: "The constitution bill, as passed by the national assembly, shall be presented to the President for authentication. The national assembly shall stand dissolved in the event that authentication is refused."

Article 27 decreed: "(1) Any question or doubt as to the interpretation of any provision of this order shall be resolved by a decision of the President, and such decision shall be final and not liable to be questioned in any court.

"(2) The President and *not* the assembly shall have the power to make any amendment in this order." (The emphasis is mine.)

The order required that members bind themselves with the prescribed oath. Among other things the oath affirmed the discharge of duties "...faithfully in accordance with the provisions of the Legal Framework Order, 1970, the law and the rules of the assembly set out in that order..."

With equal pertinence it firmly laid down five principles which would be the basis of the new constitution. Article 20

"Our struggle this time is a struggle for freedom. Our struggle this time is a struggle for independence. Joi Bangla!"

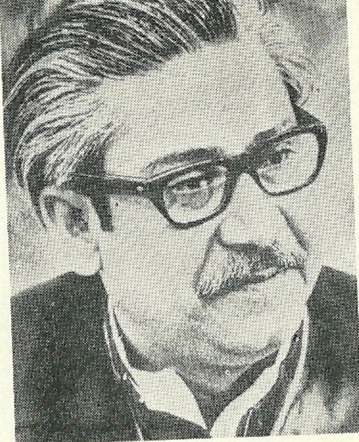
SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN

Mukti Bahini soldiers preparing for a counter-attack



After the holocaust





Bangla Bandhu

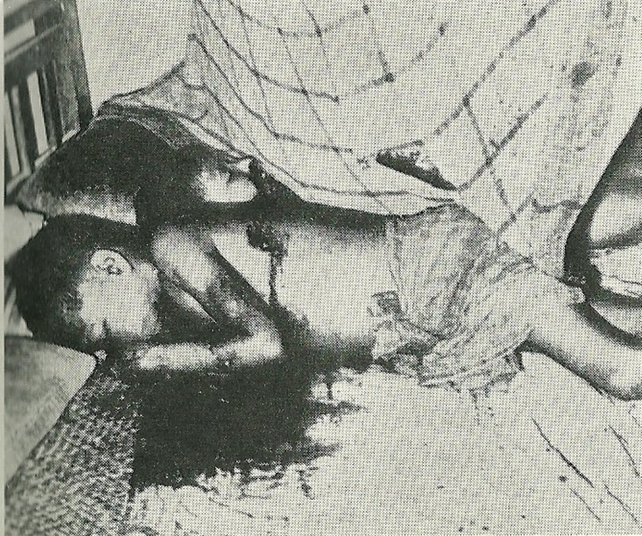
"...After such knowledge what forgiveness..."

A reminder of the brutal killing of her husband by the Pak army, reduces this woman and her brother-in-law to tears

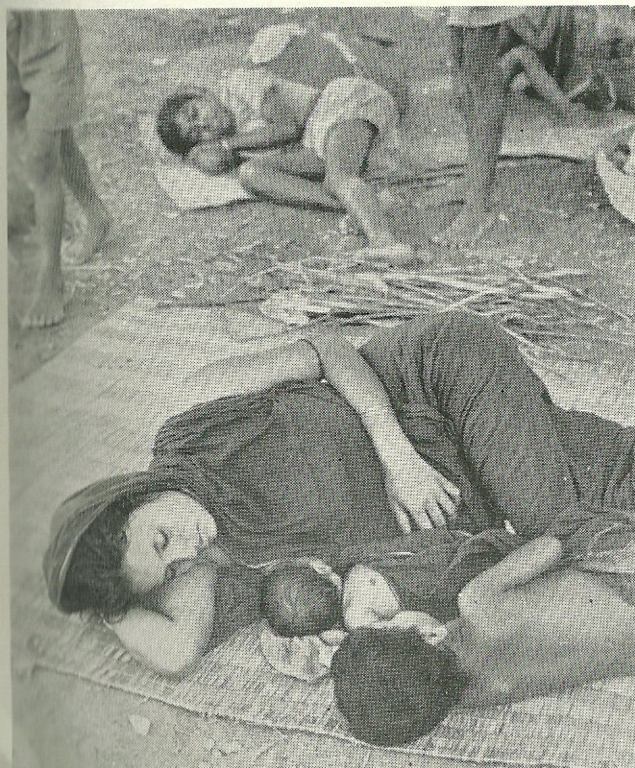


A crying refugee child in a food queue at a transit camp at Agartala, Tripura





Yahya's bull's eye



Rest after escaping the marauders

The horrors he has witnessed have unhinged his mind. This fear-stricken refugee pleads for mercy imagining his former persecutors are threatening him





The arduous trek

Graveyard for the victims of Yahya's treachery

The exile



Photographs: Courtesy, Trevor Drieberg and T.S. Satyan

specified: the constitution shall be so framed as to embody the following fundamental principles:

(1) Pakistan shall be a federal republic to be known as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in which the provinces and other territories which are now and may hereinafter be included in Pakistan shall be so united in a federation that the independence, the territorial integrity and the national solidarity of Pakistan are ensured and that the unity of the Federation is not in any manner impaired.

(2) (*a*) Islamic ideology, which is the basis for the creation of Pakistan, shall be preserved; and (*b*) the head of the State shall be a Muslim.

(3) (*a*) Adherence to fundamental principles of democracy shall be ensured by providing direct and free periodical elections to the federal and the provincial legislatures on the basis of population and adult franchise; (*b*) the fundamental rights of the citizens shall be laid down and guaranteed; and (*c*) the independence of the judiciary in the matter of dispensation of justice and enforcement of the fundamental rights shall be secured.

(4) All powers, including legislative, administrative and financial, shall be so distributed between the federal government and provinces that the provinces shall have maximum autonomy, that is to say, maximum legislative, administrative and financial powers but the federal government shall also have adequate powers, including legislative, administrative and financial powers, to discharge its responsibilities in relation to external and internal affairs and to preserve the independence and territorial integrity of the country.

(5) It shall be ensured that (*a*) the people of all areas in Pakistan shall be enabled to participate fully in all forms of national activities; and (*b*) within a specified period, economic and all other disparities between the provinces and between different areas in a province are removed by the adoption of statutory and other measures.

I have quoted extensively from the Legal Framework Order because it makes its implications painfully clear: however grandly the elected members would fancy themselves the national assembly would *not* be a sovereign body. It would, as far as the constitution was concerned, serve the purpose merely of a drafting institution subject to the whim of the President. That whim could be interpreted by Yahya Khan according to convenience. And by the paradoxical provisions of the first and fourth "principles" of constitution-making Yahya Khan had cannily sown the seeds of discord and political deadlock. One established a federal structure, the other advanced contrary stipulations that while on the one hand the provinces would have *maximum autonomy,* that is to say, *maximum* legislative, administrative and financial powers, the central government would on the other concurrently have *adequate* legislative, administrative and financial authority to discharge its responsibilities in *external and internal* affairs. You don't require a dictionary to establish the absurdity of such dispensation.

In an atmosphere already vitiated by bitter provincial and personal rivalries, Yahya Khan had called for political contortions impossible even for Pakistan's weirdly convoluted politics. Before the elections "principle" No. 4 could be interpreted at will by political parties anxious to justify their manifestoes. But within the assembly itself the deadlock could not have been better secured. In that situation Gen. Yahya Khan, always the people's friend and protector, would say national interests demanded not that but this, this.... He had, for this purpose, specifically reserved the sole right of interpreting the LFO. Even in the apparently impossible event that the assembly did circumvent the obstacle, he could still withhold assent to the constitution bill if it did not conform to his own ideas and ambition.

The total effect of what was once thought to be an innocuous "legal framework" was stunning. Yahya Khan had finally bared his teeth.

By then it was too late to protest. The resumption of poli-

tics on New Year's Day had revived the old political antagonisms and controversies. Street clashes and other outbreaks of disorder, quickly denounced by the regime as fresh evidence of political irresponsibility, had fostered public misgivings about the ability of their would-be leaders. In these circumstances Yahya Khan had astutely made his proposals a question of all or nothing.

Public gullibility again proved its undoing. For their part the politicians found the carrots—elections and the hope of ministerial office—too enticing to be spurned. So they swallowed their chagrin, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League in the East, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in the West, and hoped for a better opportunity to assert themselves against the bureaucratic-military octopus.

It was not long coming—at least for the Awami League.

Gen. Yahya Khan correctly anticipated the main opposition to fiddling a constitution would come from East Pakistan. The people there had a greater political consciousness than their compatriots in the West. After more than two decades of exploitation, they were also infinitely more suspicious of officialdom. So he astutely went all out to disarm suspicions, if not win them over heart and soul to his purpose.

The technique was simple but eminently effective. Within a few months of taking command he transformed the complexion of the central secretariat with an infusion of Bengalis in top posts. Where earlier there had been two or three Bengalis of secretary rank heading government ministries, the number was tripled in short order. Bengalis also began to decorate the State Bank, the Planning Commission, government-sponsored corporations, Pakistan embassies and the official radio and TV services.

Official delegations to foreign countries were weighted with Bengalis. Editors and journalists of East Pakistan papers, though not all Bengalis, got preference in the presidential entourage and on junkets abroad. The maximum publicity accompanied these developments. Next Admiral Ahsan, the C-in-C of the navy, was appointed Governor of East Pakistan.

This gentle, able officer had served for many years as Chairman of the province's river transport authority. During that period he had been socially prominent and won a well-deserved reputation for fairmindedness and tact. Bengalis liked him. They acclaimed his appointment.

Topping it were Gen. Yahya Khan's repeated expressions of sympathy for the Bengalis. In a radio and television broadcast on 28 July 1969, the President publicly admitted that East Pakistanis were "fully justified in being dissatisfied" about "not being allowed to play their full part in the decision-making processes at the national level and in certain important spheres of national activity." He announced army recruitment of Bengalis would be "doubled forthwith" and promised "continual enhancement of East Pakistani representation in defence forces."

Though all this gave some people in West Pakistan a complex about "the ascendency of the Bengalis," the Bengalis themselves lapped it up. The Establishment had never treated them so well.

Then, in a stepped-up bid to disarm Bengali suspicion of the LFO, Yahya Khan overreached himself. Abandonment of the parity formula for representation was to have climaxed these moves. But it proved a fatal error and the cause of their undoing.

Although a subject of long-standing complaint, parity was not an important issue. It did not figure either in the Awami League's six-point manifesto or the 11-point demand of the Bengali students. It could easily have been classified as one of the "settled issues." The Bengalis were then demanding not its undoing but the early fulfilment of the original pact in its broadest terms: equal representation in the civil service and the armed forces, and the removal of regional economic disparities operating to East Bengal's disadvantage. By unsettling the unsettled as a gratuitous measure of appeasement Gen. Yahya Khan in fact gave Bengali dissent the cutting edge it had hitherto lacked.

This danger was obvious to many others, but Yahya Khan,

an otherwise consummate politician, curiously did not see it that way. Perhaps it was overconfidence.

"One man one vote" gave East Bengal 169 of the national assembly's 313 seats and a permanent majority in the house. This built-in political advantage was a heaven sent opportunity for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He seized it to clobber the opposition. The Awami League's six-point manifesto was given the sanctity of a *Magna Carta* and the elections were made a referendum on Bengali nationalism. The inevitable result made an unholy mess of Yahya Khan's hopes of fiddling a constitution.

The intended coup failed miserably. The President, thrown off balance by defeat, never regained his cool. The subsequent recklessness and brutality used as a military answer to a purely political problem is the undoing of the state. But that's another part of the story. On 1 April 1970 all systems were to go and Yahya Khan was riding a crest without a hint of impending disaster.

In a country such as Pakistan where free expression is a scarce commodity much store is put on the manner in which things are said. Sometimes a greater value is given to those which remain unsaid. Political success often depends on what to say and how to say it.

It was the summer of 1970 and the 10-month election campaign, now at the halfway mark, was running its intended course. There was as yet no serious public complaint about official interference. Political leaders were at each other's throats and in and out of the President's mansion. Sporadic violence rocked most of the main cities. Charges and counter-charges were freely bandied by the political parties. Not for the first time did the celebrated man in the street wonder if he would make it to the polls. Operation Fiddle was proceeding smoothly.

Although it was only referred to obliquely in the press, rumour had it that the President had an ace up his sleeve. It would be played at the correct time to allay public misgivings about the course of politics and the chances of a constitution.

There were many variations of the story. The most persistent was to the effect that Yahya Khan had commissioned a panel of experts to make alternative drafts for a constitution. The presentation would vary but not the central idea, which was the formula the President had in mind.

Turned this way and that, they came up with the same answer: an effective balance between East and West Pakistan; the military establishment assured of funds for the pursuit of its fantasies; the President sitting comfortably on top of it all. It was said these alternatives would be put to the assembly, deadlocked by the anticipated political babel. Members would then seize on one of them as a "compromise formula" bringing the constitution wrangle to a successful conclusion within the stipulated 120 days.

The editor who gave me the story did not dare print it. He, however, confidentially told everyone he saw that he had had it "from the horse's mouth," the animal in question being no less than "a constitutional adviser to the President." The rumour mills were working full speed in Rawalpindi, Karachi and Daca. Opinion was growing that there would be need for the sort of magic that was being talked about. The snares had been carefully laid to the point where pundits were betting, without any takers, that the assembly would be deadlocked from the word go by compulsive disagreement on voting procedures. Speculation therefore centred on the exact complexion of Yahya Khan's hidden ace.

Little or no concern was given in West Pakistan to subtle political changes now showing on the East Bengal scene. There, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's appeals to make the election a referendum on his party's manifesto were beginning to catch fire. Significantly, many radicals, who couldn't stomach Sheikh Mujib's right-leaning moderation, were quietly lining up behind him. This development did not seem to worry watchful officialdom unduly. At the top Yahya Khan was apparently as confident as ever.

It is interesting to note that a junta was then operating on the ground floor of the presidential establishment. It consisted

of five generals and two civilians. The officers were Gen. Hamid Khan, the Army Chief of Staff; Lt-Gen Pirzada, Principal Staff Officer to the President and in most respects virtually the Prime Minister of Pakistan; Lt-Gen Tikka Khan, who was to receive notoriety a year later as the Butcher of Bengal; Maj-Gen Akbar Khan, the Director of Inter-Services Intelligence; and Maj-Gen Umar Khan, Chairman of the newly created National Security Committee. All had direct access to the President. So had the two civilians, Rizvi, the Director of the Civil Intelligence Bureau, and M.M. Ahmad, the President's Economic Adviser.

These gentlemen in the inner circle constituted a powerful panel of advisers to the President, who indisputably remained the boss and took the final decisions. They had their fingers in every pot but were apparently unconvinced about Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's election prospects. I have been told on good authority that in the early days intelligence reports from agents in the field were curiously discounted. Indeed, some informants in East Bengal were accused of being secret sympathizers of Sheikh Mujib and classified as unreliable.

The strident voices of mullahs in countless mosques in East Bengal ceaselessly campaigning on behalf of Jamat-i-Islami zealots were a reassuring sound for officialdom. Added to it were Maulana Bhashani's fulminations against the Awami League. The junta was confident that Sheikh Mujib would be cut to size in a triangular contest—perhaps with a little assist in the right places.

This confidence was in absurd contrast to the available evidence. My own assessment after a visit to the eastern wing at the beginning of November 1970 was that the Awami League would romp home. I found no real contest for 122 general seat. Of the remaining 40 the Awami League could justifiably expect to win at least half, giving it a minimum expectation of 142. That was before the devastating tidal wave that swept the southern portions of the province a few days later.

The disaster proved the last straw. The spectacle of aid pour-

ing in from all parts of the world with hardly a word of sympathy from West Pakistan—it was then occupied with a sex and suicide scandal involving a senior official and a social beauty—gave a new dimension to Bengali resentment. It was vividly brought home to the Bengalis that they could not expect to be served by their "brothers" in the other part of the country. So Sheikh Mujib's appeal did in fact make the elections a referendum on the Awami League's six-point autonomy demand. The results were devastating.

Yet it is interesting to note that to the very last the powers that be were supremely confident that the landslide would be halted. I was told that a week before the election the intelligence agencies were projecting the results as follows:

Awami League	80
Qayyum Muslim League	70
Muslim League (Daultana group)	40
National Awami Party (Wali group)	35
Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party	25

Was this an unforgiveable miscalculation or did the projection have a more sinister significance, perhaps the target that government agents in the field thought they had fixed? I am inclined to the second view.

In this context it is worthwhile noting some curious admissions by Professor G.W. Choudhury, Communications Minister and unofficial constitutional adviser to the President, in the course of a speech before the Pakistan Society, London, on 10 September 1970. It was a few days after the elections had been postponed to 7 December because of the serious floods in the eastern wing. Professor Choudhury spoke on the contemporary political scene in Pakistan and was later subjected to some searching questions by the audience. Some of these, reported in the society's Bulletin (No 31, pp 46-56) I have found very significant. I quote:

Col G.L. Hyde: On the basis of "one man one vote"

the election will result in a constituent assembly. Will that constituent assembly have a majority of members from East Pakistan?

Prof Choudhury: Yes...

Col Hyde: So that means there will always be a majority of East Pakistan?

Prof Choudhury: Well, if one believes in democracy one has to accept this "one man one vote," and we believe and we hope that there will be no such thing called East and West Pakistan in the federal legislature. This will instead develop on the basis of parties. Whichever party comes to power this general distinction we hope will not remain. So there is no question of East Pakistan members forming one single group in confrontation—*if that comes then it means that the state comes to an end,* and we are quite optimistic that this will never happen.

Mr Azam: What action will the government take in case they find that everything is being decided on the basis of East Pakistan versus West Pakistan?

Prof Choudhury: *That would certainly not be acceptable to West Pakistan.*

Mr Azam: Would the government step in and say: "You have not been able to agree amongst yourselves, therefore we have to go back to new elections"?

Prof Choudhury: As I have told you there is no likelihood of any one single party emerging either from West or East Pakistan. I am personally quite optimistic that there will be no such confrontation between East and West Pakistan.

To me Professor Choudhury's remarks clearly stipulate three things:

(1) West Pakistan would not accept the democratic verdict if the country's major population group living in East Bengal choose to speak with one voice.

(2) Should such a confrontation occur, it will be resisted

by West Pakistan, even to the undoing of the state.

(3) He would have us believe that the government at that late stage was unaware that an East-West confrontation had developed and was naively twiddling its thumbs and hoping for the best.

The first two points explain the subsequent rape of Bangla Desh. It should be an eye-opener to those who refuse to see the quality of "democracy" the President had in mind and the Machiavellian mental processes underlying the brutal military action in Bangla Desh.

I am sorry I can't swallow Professor Choudhury's third suggestion. I refuse to believe that the government, which has an impressive intelligence network, was either criminally stupid or incredibly blind not to appreciate the sharp polarization of Bengali sentiment before the elections. The regime, as I have pointed out earlier, may have been reluctant to admit its miscalculations at the start. But later the mass of evidence was too mountainous to be discarded, even by the stupid and the blind. The government was neither. It did indeed appreciate the danger and went all out to prevent it. The debacle is better explained as an executive collapse or the failure of the agents in the field to produce what they had so glibly promised their masters.

Indications of official fiddling were plentiful in the later stages of the election campaign. Some ministers made no secret of their activities, including fund-raising, on behalf of favoured parties and candidates. A member of the junta is reported to have collected Rs 15,000,000 from industrialists in the course of a single sweep. The money was used to flesh out the campaign chest of a political party prominent in the North-West Frontier Province.

The people in West Pakistan were well aware that the government was trying to influence the elections in favour of the Muslim League (Qayyum group) in the NWFP and the obscurantist Jamat-i-Islami in Karachi, Sind and the Punjab. Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan was supported in a bid to cut down the

influence of the National Awami Party led by Khan Wali Khan, the dedicated son of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, well known as the Frontier Gandhi. Wali Khan would not play ball with the government—he has never done—and in the regime's eyes was dangerously leading the people of the North-West Frontier and Baluchistan on a parallel course to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's autonomy demand. Wali Khan indeed had publicly announced support for Sheikh Mujib's six-point programme.

So Qayyum Khan's Muslim League group was shamelessly backed to break Wali Khan's growing strength. The Jamat-i-Islami received similar official support to cut down Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's influence as the focal point of opposition in West Pakistan. The newspapers owned by the National Press Trust (an undisguised handmaid of the government) were outrageously used to back Jamat-i-Islami candidates and to oppose Wali Khan, Bhutto and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In Sind, Bhutto was constantly complaining that he was being hounded by intelligence agents. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League candidates in East Bengal complained of similar official interference.

Topping all this were strong rumours from Rawalpindi and the military headquarters that the elections would be "postponed beyond 7 December 1970. My own contacts kept telling me "something big is in the offing." The devastating tidal wave and cyclone which hit the coastal areas of East Bengal in the first week of November—undoubtedly the greatest natural disaster of the century—offered a convenient excuse for such a postponement. Apparently there was great pressure from the junta to do so around this time.

In this context Yahya Khan's own public reaction is noteworthy. The President had returned from a state visit to Peking a day after the disaster. His first stop on the return journey was Dacca, and on hearing the news he immediately broke journey in the city for 24 hours. Though the extent of the disaster was not known at that time, apparently it was being given a political colour. The city was full of rumours. Some indicated

an imminent postponement of the elections. Others suggested the junta had finally taken over and Yahya Khan was reduced to the position of the first among equals.

The tension was so great that one foreign correspondent felt obliged to put a straight question to the President at an impromptu press meeting at the airport before his departure for Rawalpindi. The President's reply was prompt and forthright. He insisted he was still boss and would continue to be so as long as he was Commander-in-Chief of the army—and he had no intention of resigning.

The question would have been unthinkable a few weeks earlier. The President would probably have silenced the correspondent with a curt reply. The fact that he chose to make such a denial and that his answer was on the instructions of the Ministry of Information given the widest publicity is significant of the pressure to pull back.

All this supports my conviction that Yahya Khan was forewarned about the impending upheaval at the polls and the danger to his plans. The President apparently was confident of his ability to fiddle his way through anyway. He also did try desperately to push back the tide, but was unable to influence the course of the elections. In East Pakistan at least the people were not taken in by his overtures. They were resolutely stirred up against the military-bureaucratic combine which had so blighted their lives. No one could deflect their purpose.

On election day Yahya Khan learned the impossible had happened.

6. POST-ELECTION FARCE

Today Pakistan faces her gravest political crisis.

PRESIDENT YAHYA KHAN, 1 March 1971

Pakistan's gravest political crisis did not occur, as the President said, on 1 March 1971, when he postponed the inaugural session of the national assembly. That was the plunge over the edge—the fatal first step in the undoing of the state. The crisis itself was precipitated four months earlier when the results of the 7 December general elections were tabulated. That too was of Gen. Yahya Khan's making.

The election scoreboard (300 general seats) read:

Awami League	160
Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party	81

Independents	16
Muslim League (Qayyum group)	9
Muslim League (Daultana group)	7
Jamat-ale-Sunna	7
Hazarvi group	7
National Awami Party (Wali group)	6
Jamat-i-Islami	4
Muslim League (F.C. Choudhury group)	2
Pakistan Democratic Party	1

Thirteen seats reserved for women were filled in a subsequent election, giving the Awami League seven additional seats or 167 of the 169 allotted to East Bengal on the basis of population in a house of 313 members.

The results meant different things to different people. The Bengalis under the Awami League banner were exultant. For the first time they had the prospect of real power. With it was the ability to end the colonial patterns of the past and to remedy two decades of exploitation. Bhutto, with unexpected victories in the Punjab and Karachi, could not repress his exultation about an expanded political base. Religious groups such as the Jamat-i-Islami did not accept defeat gracefully. The Jamat, of all things, made public charges of official interference. The country as a whole was surprised by the decisive manner in which the people had given their verdict.

For Pakistanis the political consequences of the elections were even more shattering than the physical damage wrought by the cyclone and tidal wave in East Bengal a month earlier. For one thing, the rout of the obscurantist parties had shown that the new generation of Pakistanis, hardly less illiterate than their forebears, would not be misguided by zealots and charlatans making political capital of the people's piety and ignorance. Religion would no longer serve as a rallying cry in politics. For another, the polls confirmed the total rejection of the military-bureaucratic combine personified by Field Marshal Ayub Khan during the 1968-69 upheaval. On both counts far-reaching changes would have to be made.

Although immensely significant, these developments should not have been unsettling to the regime if it was sincere about its professions. After all it had avowed it was disinterested in the election results and claimed to be only a transitional authority "dedicated to the erection of democratic institutions and the early, orderly transfer of power to the representatives of the people." These platitudes had been the bent of Yahya Khan's pronouncements to date. In private conversations with political leaders the President had also made a big thing of the party fragmentation and the absence of a consensus, which he thought were obstructive factors.

In these circumstances the decisive election result should have been welcomed by the regime. It not only made it possible to have democratic answers to constitutional issues but also ensured that the reins of power could be safely transferred to a viable civilian administration. On the surface at least it would seem that Yahya Khan's prayers had been answered.

But the President saw it in an entirely different way. To him the election results were a personal disaster. The gambit of the Legal Framework Order, carefully tailored to ensure a manipulatable deadlock in the assembly, had totally failed. He would not now be able to fiddle a constitution in a house so dominated by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. On this point the electoral arithmatic was painfully clear. With 167 of the 313 seats the Awami League had an absolute majority in the assembly. Even without the support of Wali Khan's National Awami Party there would be no deadlock.

The President must have rued making such a gratuitous substitution of the parity formula by representation on the basis of population. Indulgence to East Bengal in this matter had compounded the initial miscalculation about political divisions. With parity Sheikh Mujibur Rahman could at best have secured only half the number of assembly seats and might have been manoeuvred into accommodation. As it was, the Awami League's absolute majority assured him he could do what he willed. Gen. Yahya Khan's fears were given a new edge on 9 December when Mujibur Rahman bluntly said

in Dacca that the new constitution would be based on the Awami League's six-point autonomy demand. He also made no secret of the fact that he had the strength to do it.

Thus the anticipated first obstacle—the assembly's voting procedures—would now be no obstacle at all. The Awami League by majority vote could require that the constitution be passed by a simple majority. Having accomplished that, Mujibur Rahman would lay his cards on the table for a grand slam in six points. In such an event the President's denial of assent to the constitution bill could be fatuous, even dangerous. The denial would provoke an upsurge perhaps greater than the one which toppled Ayub Khan. And he acted that way Yahya Khan would be bearing the true nature of the dictatorship—a development which would bring down upon his head international odium, with all its consequences to external economic and military assistance.

The President and his advisers were confronted by crucial alternatives. The first was to swallow the defeat of their plans and, giving in gracefully, proceed with the democratic processes to the eventual transfer of power to a civilian government. The second was not to accept the popular verdict. There was no third choice.

Yahya Khan chose the second road. He obviously did not relish the first because of the suicidal implications it had for his own ambitions and those of the military establishment. A constitution based on the Awami League's six points would not only gravely diminish the authority of the central government, that is, his own authority, but would also emasculate the military establishment because it would, for all practical purposes, be dependent on the provinces, notably East Bengal, for funds. And Mujibur Rahman had on several occasions expressed the determination to dismantle the military edifice so that it could never again interfere with the course of politics.

Yahya Khan therefore decided that the assembly would not meet unless the Awami League submitted in advance to the constitutional pattern he had in mind. This is not a guess.

The assumption is implicit in the President's subsequent actions.

Had Yahya Khan made a contrary decision and accepted the election verdict, the situation in Pakistan today would be completely different. There would for one thing have been no grave political crisis after the elections or at any other time. The country would not have been irrevocably split nor would about a million people have died in East Bengal. Acceptance of the popular verdict would have enabled the assembly to meet by the middle of January 1971. It would without much difficulty have drawn up a constitution in the stipulated time.

With civilian governments operating at the centre and in the provinces by the summer of 1971, Pakistan would have been moving forward again. This was the expectation of the people throughout the country after the elections in December 1970. It was widely acknowledged that Mujibur Rahman would not find answers to all the social and economic problems. But he had, after all, won the election and the people were willing to give him a chance. It was his right.

Yahya Khan had no such intention. His decision was to forestall Mujibur Rahman. The technique, as always, would be the stirring of political discord, in this case the development of an East Pakistan-West Pakistan confrontation on the constitutional issues *before* the assembly met. The President found both as easy tool and convenient circumstances for his purpose. The first was Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's hunger for high office which could be artfully manipulated against Mujibur Rahman. The second was the complexion of the assembly.

In the general elections the Awami League had contested several seats in West Pakistan, particularly in Rawalpindi, Karachi and other parts of Sind. But it failed in all these constituencies. As a result it wound up with all its 167 members coming from East Bengal. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) with 81 seats had fared in like manner. It did not have a single representative from East Bengal.

This curious complexion of the assembly gave the regime an excellent opportunity for mischief, to play West Pakistan against the East. Another opportunity was to be found in

the patently mischievous statements by Maulana Bhashani and some others who in the middle of December 1970 raised a cry for independence in an obvious bid to upstage Sheikh Mujib. These circumstances made it relatively easy for the regime to press on with its sinister effort.

Word was spread that the unity of the country was in danger. No one denounced Bhashani for his independence demand. Instead, his words were used to blacken Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League's proposals for provincial autonomy. At the same time some of the National Press Trust newspapers began to propagate the idea that the elections had promoted not a two-party system (the Awami League and the PPP) but "two Pakistans." The point was made that Bhutto-Mujib accord on an acceptable constitutional formula *prior* to the meeting of the assembly would be necessary if West Pakistan's interests were to be safeguarded against the supposed threat from the Bengali steamroller.

This insidious reasoning was a blatant distortion of reality. For one thing Bhutto, however bright his star appeared, could not speak on behalf of the Punjab and Sind, let alone the whole of West Pakistan. There are four provinces in the western wing. Bhutto controlled only a portion of the representation of two of them, the Punjab and Sind. He had a very small following in the North-West Frontier Province and none at all in Baluchistan. The most prominent leaders among the Pathans and the Baluchis had thrown in their lot with Sheikh Mujib.

Some political groups opposed to Bhutto in Sind and the Punjab were also making overtures in the Sheikh's direction. Because of this support from West Pakistan and his own overwhelming following in East Bengal, Mujibur Rahman could legitimately claim the ability to provide a constitution based on the six-points which would be acceptable to the country generally. With his dominant position he had no need whatsoever to come to terms with Bhutto. The question of a Bhutto-Mujib accord *prior* to the meeting of the national assembly therefore did not arise. Bhutto would have to take his chances as a minority or opposition party in the house.

There was no substance in the charge made at that time that the country's unity was threatened. Bhashani and his erstwhile colleagues who had raised the bogey of independence did indeed have an ability for mischief and, as I have said before, were obviously trying to upstage Sheikh Mujib. But they were voices in the political wilderness. After the elections they represented no one but themselves. The Awami League, which swept the polls in East Bengal, had demanded autonomy, not independence. It is a matter of record that Sheikh Mujib never once raised the cry of independence before, during or after the elections. The government's own White Paper issued on 5 August 1971 has underscored this fact. On page 4 it admits:

> The Six Points of the Awami League as publicly announced made no claim to alter or to abridge the sovereign character of Pakistan. Point No 1 stated that "the character of the government shall be federal and parliamentary." In his election speeches, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman repeatedly emphasised that he stood only for provincial autonomy, and not for the disintegration of the country or any dilution of its Islamic character. On 21st September 1970, in a public address at Narayanganj, he said, "the six-point programme would be realised and at the same time neither the integrity of Pakistan nor Islam would be jeopardised." On 24th September 1970, speaking at Dacca, he termed the elections a "referendum on the issue of provincial autonomy." In another address at Sylhet on 6th November 1970, he stated that the Awami League six-point programme "only sought to ensure that in the constitution East Bengal's interests would be safeguarded through regional autonomy." Other Awami League leaders echoed the same theme.

All this makes clear that the Government of Pakistan, ever watchful of political developments, was fully aware that the Awami League's policies were not a threat to the integrity of the state. There was also no foundation for misapprehen-

sion that East Bengal sought to dominate West Pakistan or to undermine its well-being. Nevertheless, these two insidious arguments were advanced by word of mouth and through the controlled press, and officially on behalf of the government Yahya Khan himself asked Mujibur Rahman to "come to an understanding with the PPP" when he met him for the first time after the elections in the middle of January 1971. Obviously the ground was being prepared to bypass the election results and to precipitate an East Pakistan-West Pakistan confrontation. As I have mentioned earlier, the sole object of this exercise was to create a political deadlock which would give the President another opportunity to fiddle a constitution which would guarantee his own supremacy and the interests of the military establishment. Otherwise there was no excuse for an East-West confrontation.

I will show later how the confrontation developed despite the obvious consequences to the unity of the country. The President's unofficial constitutional adviser, Professor G.W. Choudhury, may not have intended to do so in his London speech, but it did show him to be remarkably prescient. The East Pakistan-West Pakistan confrontation did come about and it resulted in the undoing of the state. Yahya Khan and not the Awami League was responsible for both.

After the elections the President moved artfully and energetically behind the scenes. But publicly he did nothing—at least he did not set a date for the much-desired meeting of the national assembly.

All through December and the first ten days of 1971 the people were amazed to find Yahya Khan indulging in what apparently was an endless series of duck and partridge shoots. These took him to Karachi, Lahore, Hyderabad, Bahawalpur and Larkhana, Bhutto's hometown, where he was entertained in great style by this Sindhi landlord. Though newspapers and clubs were full of the most ominous rumours, the people at large did not know that the President was after much bigger game.

Carpenters, electricians and furnishers who had worked at

top speed through October and November to prepare the new State Bank auditorium in Islamabad for a meeting of the national assembly had long since completed their task. The chamber was ready with up-to-date public address and simultaneous translation systems for Bengali, Urdu and English. The only thing wanting was the presidential decree convening the assembly. That announcement, it will be seen later, did not come till 13 February, two days before Mujibur Rahman's deadline for "direct action" to force the President's hand.

During this period the President's main purpose was to stir up the confrontation and to fashion Bhutto into the principal instrument for forestalling Mujibur Rahman. On his part Bhutto showed himself a willing tool.

I have known Bhutto for many years, and with an undiminished personal affection have watched at close quarters the spectacular changes in his political fortunes. I have found him at all times to be a most astute politician. But he has also been exceedingly ambitious and impatient, and his political reflexes have inevitably been coloured by the opportunism so rampant during his formative years.

Bhutto had courageously led the mass upsurge which dislodged the bureaucratic-military establishment personified by Ayub Khan. Then paradoxically he allowed himself to be used as a Judas goat for another betrayal of the people. He had the stuff of greatness. Opportunism has been his undoing. He is suffering for it.

The electoral arithmetic, though satisfying in the context of his victories in the Punjab, had left Bhutto helpless in the face of the overwhelming Awami League tide. He knew that in the normal course of events he could at best hope to control the provincial administrations in the Punjab and Sind. But at the centre and in the national assembly he would be relegated to a minor role, perhaps as leader of the opposition. This was something he could not stomach for he has always visualized himself as a Nasser striding the international scene from the top job in Pakistan.

Had Bhutto remained faithful to democratic practice as he

so ardently espouses on the public platform, he could have achieved his ambition in the course of time. Mujibur Rahman, after all, did not have all the answers. As Prime Minister he would also have been the target of escalating opposition. Bhutto could then have successfully stepped in with his own more radical economic programme. But he did not have the patience to wait.

Bhutto astutely realized that his own selfish interests were coinciding with those of the military establishment. So if he played his cards correctly he could be catapulted into the top job. I have no hesitation in assuming that Bhutto was conscious of Yahya Khan's scheming from the start. He mistakenly thought he could turn it to his own benefit and ultimately outmanoeuvre the President. Either overconfidence or an exaggerated sense of importance prevented him seeing that circumvention of the democratic process to forestall Mujibur Rahman would also undermine his own position as an elected leader, and that once the President had achieved his purpose he would have no further use for Bhutto.

Whatever the case, Bhutto was in high spirit after the elections and filled with visions of grandeur, perhaps greater than those which could have more legitimately filled Mujibur Rahman's mind. It was in these circumstances that the Awami League leader made his first overture to Bhutto.

This incident has been recounted to me firsthand by the man who carried Sheikh Mujib's message to Bhutto. The emissary was a Bengali student leader from London who was on a temporary visit to Dacca. He was on good terms with both men, and if I don't mention his name it is only in deference to his request for anonymity. When he informed Mujibur Rahman of his intention of making a courtesy call on Bhutto three weeks after the election, the Awami League leader said: "Tell Mr Bhutto if he wants the big job I'm prepared to give it to him if he is ready to accept my six points." Mujib also wanted Bhutto to "join hands in getting the army out of politics and back to the barracks."

The message was accordingly carried to Karachi. Bhutto,

who had just returned from Larkhana, was as usual holding court in his elegant Clifton residence. There was the usual throng of supplicants and friends, threaded with some newly elected members of the national and provincial assemblies. The Bengali student leader was ushered into the inner sanctum, where he delivered his message privately to Bhutto over a glass of whisky.

Bhutto was ecstatic. "Did he really say so?" he inquired with wide-eyed interest. When the message was affirmed, Bhutto immediately asked Babu, his man Friday, to bring in the telephone and booked an urgent person-to-person long distance call to Mujibur Rahman. Unfortunately, the Awami League leader could not be traced either at his residence or in the party office. Bhutto would not be repressed. He asked my informant to carry a message back to Sheikh Mujib. "Tell him I'm involved in some by-elections and can't see him now. But I'll send Mustapha Kaher to see him. I'm personally not opposed to the six points but I've got to carry my party with me."

The message was telephoned to Sheikh Mujib the following day. A day later Mustapha Kaher, Bhutto's personal representative, was carrying greetings to the Awami League chief in Dacca.

Although nothing came of the incident, its recounting provides an interesting insight into the political conditions prevailing in Pakistan at that time. Bhutto for one was so captivated by the prospect of high office that he eagerly responded to an enticing offer from the one man who could deliver the goods in the Assembly. It also explains Bhutto's subsequent swing to Gen. Yahya Khan when he found the President determined not to let Mujibur Rahman have his way. But was Sheikh Mujib serious? Or was he just throwing *dhana?* (Dhana, or grain, is the Urdu version of the carrot and a popular term used by the rustic politicians of Sind and the Punjab to demonstrate bird trapping.)

A longstanding personal friendship with Sheikh Mujib and an intimate knowledge of his mental processes convince

me of his sincerity. For one thing it must be remembered that the Awami League's pattern for provincial autonomy greatly reduced the importance of the Prime Minister. Sheikh Mujib himself had said he was not enamoured of the job and would rather devote his energies to the betterment of his home province. For another the Awami League leader was painfully aware of the official moves to forestall a constitution based on his party's six-point manifesto.

While he was confident of his own unique position in East Bengal and in the assembly, Mujibur Rahman was shrewed enough to foresee how an East Pakistan-West Pakistan confrontation could be worked to his disadvantage. By joining hand with Bhutto he would have turned the tables on the generals. In that event any attempt by the President to thwart the democratic process would have led to a straight fight between the people and the establishment. It would have been identical to the upsurge against Ayub Khan and would have had the same result.

In these circumstances the offer of the "big job" to Bhutto was a well-conceived gambit and a small price to pay to get the army out of politics and back to the barracks. It failed not for want of trying but because Yahya Khan was one jump ahead in this outrageous post-election political farce and because in Bhutto's mind the President, with the army's backing, still had the whiphand.

On 13 January, almost six weeks after the general elections, Yahya Khan finally abandoned his far-ranging shikar trips and got down to the serious business of talking to the leader of the party which had won an absolute majority in the national assembly. The President had, of course, much earlier had discussions with Bhutto in Larkhana. These were described as an incidental exchange of ideas while the President was in the area. But however casual it may have been made out to be, the slight did not go unnoticed by the Awami League in Dacca.

There Mujibur Rahman had been vainly calling for an early meeting of the national assembly to get on with the task of

constitution-making. To fortify his position, Mujibur Rahman had got the Awami League representatives to take public oaths of unflinching adherence to the six points of the party manifesto. This was made out to be an unfortunate provocation in West Pakistan.

To complicate matters still further some West Pakistan newspapers had published reports to the effect that Mujibur Rahman would not call on Yahya Khan but would insist that the projected meetings be held in his own house. The patently fabricated rumours—obviously part of the technique of confrontation—reached such a pitch that Sheikh Mujib was forced to make a public denial. The Awami League chief made clear that the President would be accorded all courtesies when he visited Dacca and that he himself would have no hesitation in calling on Gen. Yahya Khan.

Despite these developments the meeting between the President and the Awami League chief went off without a hitch and in an atmosphere of cordiality. Apart from detailing his ideas for the Constitution, Mujibur Rahman tried to allay the President's misgivings about the position of the army in the projected pattern of provincial autonomy. To this end I understand he gave Yahya Khan the assurance that the military budget would remain intact for two years.

Describing the meeting, at a press conference on 17 April 1971, Tajuddin Ahmad, the Awami League chief's close confident and now Prime Minister of Bangla Desh, said:

> General Yahya probed the extent of the Awami League's commitment to its programme and was assured that they were fully aware of its implications. But contrary to expectations, Yahya did not spell out his own ideas about the constitution. General Yahya gave the impression of not finding anything seriously objectionable in Six Points but emphasised the need for coming to an understanding with the PPP in West Pakistan.

The Bengalis were pleasantly surprised when in the course

of an informal chat with reporters at Dacca airport before his departure for Rawalpindi, Yahya Khan described Sheikh Mujib as the country's "future Prime Minister."

Was the President serious? I doubt it. Had he been so, the President would have had no hesitation in acceding to Sheikh Mujib's demand for the assembly to meet from 15 February. Instead, Yahya Khan not only gave no indication of when the assembly would meet but also insisted on the need for an Awami League understanding with Bhutto's PPP. With Bhutto primed earlier, this insistence was obviously a way of setting the trap of an East-West confrontation. Bhutto's subsequent actions confirm this assumption.

When Bhutto reached Dacca on 27 January 1971 with his retinue of party men and advisers, his mood was far removed from the eager beaver he had been when he got Sheikh Mujib's message towards the end of December. Though he spent more than eight hours closeted alone with the Awami League chief, Bhutto did not probe the idea of "joining hands" against the army. Instead, he sought "clarifications" of the six-point manifesto. His attitude on the whole was both disappointing and puzzling to Sheikh Mujib.

Tajuddin Ahmad's own evidence of what transpired is as follows:

> As in the case with Yahya, Mr Bhutto did not bring any concrete proposals of his own about the nature of the constitution. He and his advisers were mainly interested in discussing the implications of Six Points. Since their responses were essentially negative and they had no brief of their own, it was not possible for the talks to develop into serious negotiations where attempts could be made to bridge the gap between the two parties. It was evident that as yet Mr Bhutto had no formal position of his own from which to negotiate.

I cannot agree with Tajuddin Ahmad's conclusion. Bhutto is no fool, certainly not the type to have no definite ideas

about what he wants. The fact is that the Yahya Khan-Bhutto collusion to forestall Sheikh Mujib had been established. They did not want to disclose their game by prematurely advancing demands on the Awami League. That would come later. For the present it was enough to go through the motions of discussions to hoodwink both the people and the Awami League and to establish the basis for future expressions of grievance.

The first step in this outrageous farce was the President's meeting with Sheikh Mujib. The second, the Bhutto-Mujib talks in Dacca two weeks later.

The sequence of other steps is extremely revealing:

January 29: Bhutto leaves Dacca after inconclusive meetings with Mujibur Rahman. He goes with the understanding that the doors are wide open and he would either return for further discussions at a later stage or would take up the issues in the lobbies and the committees of the national assembly.

February 11: After a two-day meeting of his party representatives in Multan Bhutto tells the press that only "the finishing touches remain" for the PPP's draft of the constitution.

February 12: Bhutto flies to Rawalpindi and has a lengthy meeting with Yahya Khan and apparently changes his mind about the constitution draft.

February 13: Yahya Khan announces the national assembly will meet in Dacca on 3 March. Bhutto flies to Peshawar. At a cocktail party that night in a bungalow in university town, Bhutto, glass in hand electrifies the gathering with the words: "Bhutto is once again in the saddle. It has been decided by the powers that are. Mujib is out. I'm to be Prime Minister."

February 14: Bhutto has a long meeting with Wali Khan, the chief of the National Awami Party. Bhutto wants Wali Khan to join him in opposing Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. When Wali refuses, Bhutto confidentially tells him "not even my party knows but I'm not going to Dacca for the national assembly session."

February 15: Bhutto tells a press conference at Peshawar that he will boycott the assembly session at Dacca unless he has a prior understanding with Mujibur Rahman on consti-

tutional patterns which would safeguard West Pakistan interests. Bhutto also threatens to "break the legs" of any member from West Pakistan who tries to attend the assembly session.

February 21: Yahya Khan dissolves his civilian cabinet and presides over a meeting of the military governors and martial law administrators at Rawalpindi. Though no announcements are made, the city is full of rumours; some hinting at impending changes others to the effect that the President, disgusted with the "political disorder" had decided to suspend the movement towards representative government.

February 24-28: At least 36 members of the assembly from West Pakistan, despite Bhutto's threats, are booked to fly to Dacca for the inaugural session.

February 28: Bhutto publicly calls for a postponement of the assembly meeting.

March 1: Yahya Khan, without consulting Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the major party, postpones indefinitely the inaugural meeting of the national assembly. The excuse: East Pakistan-West Pakistan confrontation and the PPP's boycott of the assembly. The reasoning: "Pakistan's gravest political crisis."

I have laid out the bare bones of the political developments because they clearly demonstrate the chain of mischief and the pattern of the post-election farce.

First an East Pakistan-West Pakistan confrontation is deliberately engineered by the regime with the active collusion of Bhutto. Then the confrontation is used as an excuse to thwart the meeting of the national assembly and its constitution-making purpose. Everything is done with the flimsiest pretexts and with the most blatant distortion of the truth.

Who gave Bhutto, as he stated when announcing the boycott of the assembly session, the impression that the house would be made "only to endorse the constitution which has already been prepared by the Awami League and which cannot be altered even an inch here or an inch there"? Bhutto had not seen the Awami League's constitution draft nor had he dis-

cussed alternative proposals with Mujibur Rahman. When he left Dacca 17 days earlier Bhutto, apart from not giving any hint of a deadlock, had specifically indicated he was willing to have further talks with Mujibur Rahman. He had no contact with him again. So how did the deadlock occur and when?

For his part Sheikh Mujib, while always holding himself open to discussion, had only insisted that the constitution should be debated and finalized in the national assembly as democracy required and not in secret meetings outside its ambit. Never once did he give the impression that he intended to steamroller a constitution or to use the assembly merely as a rubber-stamp. Certainly he did not say the Awami League's draft "cannot be altered one inch here or an inch there."

Bhutto's assumptions are therefore surprising. Either he had a curious extra-sensory perception which enabled him to see the unseeable or he had been specially programmed to act as he did. However gifted he may be, not even Bhutto will claim the ability to mind-read at long distance. So the assumption that he was specially programmed compels attention. It is also supported by the chain of events. Sheikh Mujib's threat of direct action by the middle of February forced the President on 13 February to fix a date for the national assembly meeting. It is not without significance that the announcement was made the day after his marathon meeting with Bhutto in Rawalpindi.

Nor is it merely coincidental that Bhutto should at this crucial juncture make a public *volte face* in the short space of 72 hours. On 11 February he was talking in Multan about giving the "finishing touches" to the PPP's constitution draft. On 12 February he met the President in Rawalpindi. On 14 February Bhutto was telling Wali Khan in Peshawar of his intention to boycott the assembly session. And don't forget Bhutto's indiscretion about the "powers that are" during the cocktail party on 13 February. With all this evidence no mind-stretching is required to know who was programming whom and for what purpose.

What was Sheikh Mujib doing during this period? Certainly nothing as damaging as Bhutto or the President himself. The Awami League leader had since January been quoted as taking an increasingly stiffer line by foreign newspaper correspondents. Inevitably, this was ascribed to annoyance about the unseemly delay in convening the assembly. Sheikh Mujib would not be provoked even by Bhutto's announced boycott. Mujib's only mistake, I feel, was not to visit West Pakistan after the elections. Even a brief speaking tour of Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi would have won him many friends in the West and also undone the propaganda spread against him by interested parties.

Yahya Khan's own reasons for postponing the assembly meeting are also worth nothing. In his broadcast on 1 March 1971 he said:

> In the past few weeks certain meetings between our political leaders have indeed taken place. But I regret to say that instead of arriving at a consensus some of our leaders have taken hard attitudes. This is a most regrettable situation. This has cast a shadow of gloom over the nation. The position briefly is that the major party of West Pakistan, namely the Pakistan People's Party, as well as certain other political parties have declared their intention not to attend the national assembly session on the 3rd of March 1971. In addition, the general situation of tension created by India has further complicated the whole position. I therefore decided to postpone the summoning of the national assembly to a later date.

Elaborating the argument in the course of the same speech, Yahya Khan said: "I realized that, with so many representatives of the people of West Pakistan keeping away from the assembly, if I were to go ahead with the inaugural session on the 3rd of March the assembly itself could have disintegrated and the entire effort made for the smooth transfer of power that has been outlined earlier would have been wasted."

The speech, which marked a turning-point in the history of Pakistan, is notable for its curious omissions, its even more curious reasoning and for the outright distortion of fact.

First, the President speaks of the East-West confrontation and blames the Awami League. There is no criticism of Bhutto, whose boycott of the assembly precipitated the confrontation.

Secondly, Yahya Khan should have no reason to apprehend the disintegration of the assembly because of Bhutto's boycott. On 1 March more than two-thirds of the members, including 36 from West Pakistan, were physically present in Dacca. More were expected to fly in from the western wing by 3 March, the scheduled date of the inauguration.

Present in Dacca were representatives from *all* the provinces, including Sind and the Punjab, which Bhutto claimed to control. The only absentees would be the PPP and the Muslim League (Qayyum group). Even these two parties would not be entirely unrepresented because members of each had given clear indication of revolt and would probably have turned up in Dacca at the last moment.

Thirdly, the President, had he so desired, could easily have squashed the boycott by the application of martial law orders prohibiting coercion, disorder and obstruction of the constitution-making process. Bhutto's threats about breaking legs clearly came within the mischief of martial law. The Legal Framework Order, in whose ambit the assembly would be meeting, provided further remedies against such a boycott.

Article 11 of the LFO among other things stipulated: "If a member is absent from the assembly without leave of the speaker for fifteen consecutive sitting days, his seat shall become vacant" and "if a member fails to take and subscribe an oath in accordance with Article 12 within a period of *seven* days from the date of the first meeting of the assembly after his election, his seat shall become vacant."

When Bhutto announced his boycott, public expectation was that the seven-day stipulation would be invoked either to force his attendance or to force him out. Significantly,

Bhutto himself had no such qualms. He dismissed reporters' questions with a curt "wait and see." Hindsight shows he had no reason to fear disqualification because of a prior arrangement with the President.

The boycott had been staged at his request and Yahya Khan would reciprocate by postponing the assembly meeting. I have it on good authority that Bhutto had in fact on 24 February told some politicians about the impending postponement. Collusion is obvious. Otherwise, Bhutto would have fallen into line at the snap of the President's fingers. He would not on any account endanger his seat in the national assembly.

Fourth, the boycott should not have surprised the President. Apart from the obvious arrangement with Bhutto, Yahya Khan is also reported to have personally asked some right-wing members from Karachi, Peshawar and Lahore not to attend the assembly session. I have this on the personal oath of a prominent politician who was in touch with these gentlemen at that time. Further confirmation is provided by Tajuddin Ahmad, who said in his Press statement of 17 April, "...there is evidence that Lt-Gen Umer, Chairman of the National Security Council and a close associate of Yahya with a view to strengthening Mr Bhutto's hand, personally pressurized various west wing leaders not to attend the assembly."

Yahya Khan's mention of "the tension created by India" as one of the reasons for the postponement of the assembly session needs some explanation. The reference was to the fall-out from the hijacking and subsequent destruction in Lahore of an Indian Airlines Fokker Friendship on 29 January while flying between Srinagar and Jammu. Had the plane been allowed to return safely to its home base there would not have been any fall-out, no tension, and therefore not another excuse for postponing the assembly session. As it was, the whole incident misfired from the start.

It is no secret that the hijacking was rigged from within Pakistan. Indeed, someone jumped the gun and broke the news to the Karachi press half an hour before the aircraft

actually touched down at Lahore. The man who telephoned claimed in the information he was "a Kashmiri freedom fighter." The changeover was hushed up. An elaborate plan was then launched to reinject the Kashmir issue into the front pages of the international press. The hijackers would be made the focal point of an agonizing cliff-hanger: will they or won't they blow up the plane?

A compromise would then be offered. The plane would be handed over to UN Secretary General U Thant or a prominent nominee after appropriate assurances that Kashmir would be made the subject of a new debate in the Security Council. That plan also misfired because of rivalries within the local Punjabi camp. The intermediary, dubbed the "hijackers' friend," was dragged from the vicinity of the aircraft by an overly officious constable. The man inside panicked and blew up the plane. The explosion shook the Pakistan Foreign Office to its foundations.

But politically the incident at least had one mitigating factor. It provoked a sharp rebuke from Mujibur Rahman. This was subsequently used to underscore the charge that Mujib was not only "soft" on India but also a dangerous man to have at the helm of affairs.

But even such excuses were not really necessary for the purpose of forestalling the Awami League chief. The President had decided that the assembly would not meet unless the Awami League submitted in advance to his own formula for the constitution. After that it was just a matter of fiddling an excuse, any excuse.

On 1 March 1971, Yahya Khan boldly took that fatal first step over the precipice.

7. THE ARMY MOVES

He who guards his secrets attains a high goal—
Holy Quran

Legend on the OPS ROOM bulletin board,
16 Division Headquarters, Pakistan Army,
Comilla

It was the middle of February 1971, and President Yahya Khan was assiduously playing a cat-and-mouse game with the politicians. Zulfiquar Ali Bhutto, ever looking for a short-cut to high office, had grabbed the bait the President had been dangling before him since the elections the preceding December. The PPP leader's announcement in Peshawar that he would boycott the assembly session had set the trap for a new political deadlock in the country. East Pakistan and West Pakistan

were now locked in confrontation over constitutional issues that should never have been. And with Bhutto's credibility as a democratic leader irrevocably destroyed, there was no danger of the young Sindhi politicians doing another *volte face* to join Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in turning the tables on the military establishment.

As far as he could see, Yahya Khan was safe and riding high. He could whenever he chose, spring the trap shut on Sheikh Mujib by postponing the national assembly session. But first there was need for action on another plane.

It was time for the army to move. There were obvious reasons for this. For one thing the West Pakistan military force in East Bengal would have to be substantially increased. The heavy hand of the central authority had always been stolidly resisted by the Bengalis. In this case the postponement of the assembly session was bound to provoke a widespread, violent reaction from Sheikh Mujib and the newly elected representatives of the Awami League. Civil disorder would inevitably exacerbate the already grave Pakistan-India tension arising out of the hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane to Lahore. The President accordingly decided that the West Pakistan military force in East Bengal would need to be sufficiently strengthened to cope with the danger on both fronts.

Yahya Khan's military instincts were correct. His mistake was a miscalculation of the extent of the Bengali reaction. In this he was true to form. Blind contempt for the Bengalis has always been a common failing of the colonially-minded administration.

Yahya Khan also thought it necessary to carry the full military establishment with him in the new denial of the popular will. Hitherto everything had been done in the inner circle of the President's house. As mentioned earlier, this consisted of Gen Hamid Khan, Army Chief of Staff, recently promoted to four-star rank; Lt-Gen Pirzada, Principal Staff Officer to the President; Lt-Gen Tikka Khan, Corps Commander; Lt-Gen Gul Hasan, Chief of General Staff; Maj-Gen Umar,

Chairman of the National Security Committee; and Maj-Gen Akbar, Director of Inter-Services Intelligence. The two civilians associated with these militarymen were M.M. Ahmed, Economic Adviser to the President and Pakistan's most powerful civil servant, and Rizvi, Director of the Civil Intelligence Bureau. These men had Yahya Khan's confidence and were apparently very loyal to him.

The question now was to sell the idea of thwarting a constitution based on Mujibur Rahman's six points to the rest of the top military brass. These were the military governors and the martial law administrators of the five provinces and the commanders-in-chief of the air force and the navy. They were on the whole honest, intelligent men devoid of personal ambition and with the military officer's natural distaste for interfering with the civil side. Two of them—Lt-Gen Atiq-ur-Rahman, formerly governor of undivided West Pakistan and now governor of the Punjab, and Lt-Gen Rakhman Gul, the governor of Sind—I had watched from close quarters. I found them to be practical and compassionate and doing a distasteful task remarkably well.

I have no doubt that the others were like them. These men in the outer group were a world apart from the stereotype of the military governor and a refreshing contrast to those at the centre of the military establishment in Rawalpindi. There Lord Acton's dictum had come home to roost. Countless stories have been told about some of the officers in the inner circle. Keeping tag of their goings on is a popular parlour game for the diplomatic set in the Pakistan capital.

The President's decision to confide in the full military group was an act of prudence. However much he might sugarcoat it, the contemplated action of indefinitely postponing the meeting of the national assembly amounted to a reversal of the movement to civilian government. It would fundamentally change the military attitude at a time when some governors were eager to get back to the barracks. Hence the broadcast support of the military establishment was necessary for the success of the venture. Otherwise, there would be dissent,

perhaps a dangerous revolt, and the President would be avoidably vulnerable.

Yahya Khan went about it in the proper military manner. First he dismissed his civilian cabinet. These ministers had only advisory roles and their departure would not be missed. They offered a convenient window-dressing for foreign eyes. They also served as embarrassing pipelines for information out of the President's house. The dismissal of the cabinet would not only ensure secrecy but would also demonstrate to interested quarters that the army meant business.

Having done this, Yahya Khan summoned the commanders-in-chief of the air force and navy and the military governors and the martial law administrators to a full dress meeting with the inner circle in the President's House at Rawalpindi. Details of what transpired are still secret. There are indications that Admiral Ashan, the Governor of East Bengal, and the martial law administrator of the province, Lt-Gen Sahibzada Yacub, strongly opposed postponement and warned that it would create an unmanageable situation fraught with the most dangerous consequences.

They were the men on the spot and knew the Bengalis intimately. But they were overruled. There appears to be some truth in the rumour that Admiral Ashan resigned at this point either because he wanted no part in this shoddy affair or because he saw through the game. He left Rawalpindi in a black mood and was asked to return from Karachi airport minutes before he caught an onward flight to Dacca. Apparently, he was prevailed upon to remain in the governorship because a change at that time would have signified a split in the military establishment. This the government wanted to avoid.

The scholarly Sahibzada Yacub, who was on good terms with Mujibur Rahman, apparently also had serious misgivings about the turn of events. Both men were to be abruptly relieved of their posts on 2 March after Yahya Khan finally took his intended action.

Whatever transpired at the meeting, Yahya Khan emerged

apparently with the unqualified support of the military establishment for whatever he intended to do.

Obviously, the top brass had been made to swallow the idea that a constitution based on the Awami League's six points, as Mujibur Rahman contemplated, would emasculate the armed forces and endanger the state. This was not as difficult a trick as it would appear to be. Yahya Khan had everything going for him. For one thing, the Pakistan armed forces have always considered India their principal enemy. The army, navy and air force are ever poised for action against that country.

The aftermath of the hijacking incident had made the defence of the two wings all the more difficult and underscored the need for the maximum preparedness. Coming at this time was Mujibur Rahman's publicly expressed desire to have an understanding with what was to them the hated enemy. Apart from publicly criticizing the central government's handling of the hijacking incident, he had also made it known that he considered the present expansive military establishment a financial burden the country could not afford if it desired social and economic advancement of the kind promised during the election campaign.

On both counts Mujibur Rahman appeared an avoidable danger to the effectiveness of the armed forces and to the security of the state. To them an antagonistic Awami League government presiding over a loosely knit federation of provinces would be a suicidal development.

Put so simply, as indeed it must have been, I have no doubt whatsoever that the otherwise honest and intelligent officers would have had no hesitation in backing the projected presidential action. After all, it could be argued that the President only wanted to ensure a strong military structure and an effective central authority. Which Pakistani soldier could fault such an apparently patriotic design?

Having secured his power base, Yahya Khan and his team began to move swiftly. There were only six days left for the big event and therefore no time to lose. Generals Hamid,

Tikka Khan and Umar were sent to Dacca, Lahore and Karachi on a variety of missions. The commanders-in-chief of the air force and the navy were given separate assignments connected with their services. Newspaper editors in Karachi were told without explanation that the movements of the top brass should not be reported unless press releases were made by the inter-services public relations department. There was a lifting of eyebrows about this order, but no comment. That would be dangerous.

At the same time, the armed forces were put on a new state of alert throughout the country. The excuse was tension with India. With the same explanation a battalion of the Baluch Regiment and a big load of ammunition was ordered for shipment to Eastern Command Headquarters at Dacca. The first available ship happened to be the MV Swat, a Cargo vessel standing by to make the long trip to Chittagong via Ceylon. It was requisitioned for the army, ammunition and troops being loaded under the cover of darkness. When the ship showed up at Chittagong on 3 March the Bengalis were surprised by the glimpse they had of the meticulous care and long planning that had gone into the operation designed to cheat them of the fruits of their election victory.

Other troops with more supplies would be flown to Dacca in air force C-130's in the next few days. They would bring West Pakistani units to full strength and replace Bengali units which were being removed from key areas and transferred to West Pakistan.

Standby arrangements for airlifting troops were made with Pakistan International Airlines. Men working at Karachi airport reported a sudden flurry of military activity at the Haj terminal, which is normally deserted outside the pilgrimage season. This would become a military transit centre and between 2 and 24 March PIA commercial flights would carry about 12,000 troops in civvies on the 6000-mile journey to Dacca via Ceylon. The Ceylonese authorities would be unable to protest because the planes ostensibly carried only civilian passengers duly ticketed and manifested.

Many transfers were reported from the navy in Karachi. Where Bengalis provided 70 per cent of the crew, some ships were soon given non-Bengali complements. These units of the destroyer flotilla were rushed for duty at Chittagong and Chalna in the eastern wing. At Mauripur airbase, near Karachi's popular seaside resort, many young Bengali fighter pilots found themselves assigned to non-flying duties.

In Dacca, Bengalis employed at Eastern Command Headquarters were puzzled by the large movements of men and material. But they were on the whole kept in the dark. Senior Bengali army and air force officers were bundled out of Dacca on innocuous assignments in remote, non-military centres. A unit of the Bengal Regiment took up residence in the East Pakistan Rifles quarters at Peelkhana in Dacca. Tanks in defensive positions against India in the Rangpur district and in Mymensing were brought into Dacca. Within hours of their arrival they were converted to soft belts for use in the cities.

There was a minor stir in the city on 28 February when a gardener spread the news that Lt-Gen Sahibzada Yacub, Martial Law Administrator of East Pakistan, had ordered his servants to pack his belongings. The General was not to leave till 3 March, after he had been summarily replaced by Lt-Gen Tikka Khan. It seems he knew what was coming.

In other centres in East Bengal it was noticed that the children of West Pakistani military officers had been "temporarily" taken out of school. The families were quietly sent to Dacca and later flown to Karachi on the same planes that brought troops in.

All this indicated that the military conference in Rawalpindi in the third week of February had been a turning-point. Yet it went relatively unnoticed. Clearly, the military establishment had girded itself for a showdown. But it was not to know till after 1 March when postponement of the assembly was announced, how badly it had miscalculated the Bengali upsurge. Then all the planning fell to pieces and it became a desperate struggle to buy time. In that event too Yahya Khan was to prove himself an astute General. He tied up the politicians

in an endless series of discussions and disarmed suspicion while the army doubled its strength in East Bengal. Then, at the moment and place of his own choosing, he struck hard.

The postscript to the operation was supplied by Maj Bashir in Comilla. "I can never tell you," he said with undisguised admiration, "how this great man saved us."

8. 25 DAYS TO REMEMBER

Even Gandhi would have marvelled.

KHAN WALI KHAN

1 March 1971 started off as just another day in the life of East Bengal.

In Dacca the streets were as crowded as ever with hawkers, shoppers, beggars and the inevitable cycle-rickshaws weaving in and out of the motor traffic with breath-taking insouciance. At Saddarghat, on the banks of the Buriganga, country craft and paddle steamers crossed and recrossed the river with thousands of noisy commuters. In the lounges of the Dacca Club the usual throng of businessmen in bush shirts and government officers in linen suits chatted amiably over plates of *aloo chat* and fish fingers. And on pavements everywhere

pineapple vendors did a brisk trade in succulent one-anna slices of the delectable fruit.

Then the bomb fell. To Bangla Desh it was more shattering than Hiroshima.

Going on the air at an unusual hour was a statement by President Yahya Khan announcing postponement of the session of the national assembly, scheduled to meet for the first time two days later. The statement was a jumble of argument, prayers to Allah and appeals in the name of the father of the nation. But it set no new date for the assembly meeting.

It didn't matter to the stunned Bengalis. All they could think of was that West Pakistan had broken faith again. This was the supreme act of treachery, the end of the line, a declaration of war—call it what you will, the sentiment was the same: Bangla Desh would have to seek a separate destiny. West Pakistan wanted it that way.

Within minutes shops, offices, restaurants and bazaars had emptied. No meeting had been announced—there was no time for it—but long lines of people were seen making their way to the Paltan Maidan, the traditional forum for public dissent. They were grimfaced and they carried bamboo poles, iron rods, hockey sticks, even coconut fronds stripped of their greenery.

Astonished foreigners, West Pakistanis among them, were witnessing a spontaneous outburst of anger the like of which could not have been achieved by a thousand anarchists spouting venom from a thousand soapboxes. The events in Dacca were repeated elsewhere in the province.

Bangla Desh was born that day in the hearts of its angry people.

The crowd on the maidan had swelled to over 50,000 by 4.30 P.M., when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his associates began assemblying in the Purbani Hotel for an emergency meeting of the Awami League's Working Committee. Abuse of Yahya Khan and Bhutto was interspersed with slogans of Joi Bangla and "Independence, yes, surrender, no!" Now and then a student leader got up to harangue the crowd about

independence and the "treachery of the Yahya-Bhutto clique."

After much shouting, a number of people broke off from the crowd and returned to the shopping area on Jinnah Avenue. There they smashed windowpanes, looted stalls and set fire to a clothing store owned by a West Pakistani. The trouble began to spread.

Meanwhile, the large square outside the Purbani Hotel was filled by a boisterous crowd chanting slogans and demanding independence. A Pakistan flag was brought from somewhere and burnt without ceremony. The neighbouring PIA office had its windows smashed. Some youngsters also tried to loot the West Pakistani shops in the foyer of the hotel.

The crowd was getting out of hand when Mujibur Rahman hurried onto a balcony. His speech was brief and to the point. There would be a general strike in Dacca on 2 March and a provincewide strike the next day. He also told the people that he would address them again on 7 March on the racecourse, when he would unfold a programme of action for the achievement of self-determination. It was obvious that Sheikh Mujib, who ignored the repeated calls for independence, was not getting through to the crowd.

But he remained undaunted, even rebuking the people for riotous behaviour and ordering stolen goods to be returned to their owners. Some Awami League workers at his request did go to Jinnah Avenue, where they chastized some people and recovered looted property. But on the whole the speech did nothing to answer public sentiment. The angry people soon dispersed to rampage through the city.

There were clashes all over Dacca that night between rioters and the police. Several cases of arson were reported along with attacks on the persons and property of non-Bengalis. When League volunteers tried to intervene some were roughed up by the irate crowds. By that time the trouble had spread to the neighbouring industrial town of Narayanganj, where several incidents were reported.

This was the start of a 25-day mass upsurge of a kind un-

precedented in Pakistan. The army had never expected anything like it.

Dacca was completely paralysed next day as the city responded to Mujibur Rahman's call for a general strike. The only movement was by crowds of demonstrators. It soon became apparent to the anxious monitors at Eastern Command Headquarters that the normal law enforcement agencies would be unable to cope with the mounting trouble. Accordingly a 12-hour curfew was imposed at 7 P.M. and the army moved in to restore order.

It was like holding a split bamboo door against the storm. Curfew was defied everywhere. When army patrols trying to enforce the order opened fire and killed several people, they were attacked by others with their bare hands. The Bengalis were beginning to show the stuff they were made of.

On 3 March Mujibur Rahman called a provincewide strike and launched a non-violent non-coöperation movement. The upsurge by then had spread to the other parts of the province. Everywhere the people responded to Sheikh Mujib's appeal and the movement became more orderly and effective, though sporadic cases of violence continued to take place. Restoration of order in Dacca was assisted by the withdrawal of troops after it was found they could not enforce the curfew. The troops also began to feel the pinch of hunger as supplies, including foodstuffs, were denied on the orders of the Awami League.

There was serious trouble in Chittagong that night when the authorities tried to unload the MV Swat which had arrived with troops and a cargo of ammunition. Dock workers spread the news. Soon thousands of people were locked in battle with West Pakistani soldiers and sailors. The trouble gained a new dimension when a unit of the East Pakistan Rifles refused to fire on Bengali demonstrators. Seven men were court-martialled and, it is learnt, subsequently shot. This action gave a sharper edge to Bengali resentment.

The Awami League grip on the situation tightened as the non-cooperation spread and the province was shut down

by a series of crippling strikes. On 3 March Mujibur Rahman had ordered "continuous strikes"—a daily shutdown from 7 A.M. to 2 P.M. Accordingly, everything in the province ceased to function during those hours. Government offices were closed, banks bolted shut, even postal, telegraphic, telephone, airline and train services came to a standstill. In the army centres in Dacca, Comilla, Chittagong, Jessore and elsewhere troops were shifted to short rations as foodstuffs were denied by the non-cooperating Bengalis.

It was in this situation that Lt-Gen Tikka Khan flew into Dacca to take over from Governor Ahsan, who had been abruptly dismissed by the President. Tikka Khan was an old hand at quelling disturbances. He had already acquired the reputation of "Butcher of Baluchistan" as a result of the heavy hand he had used to put down disorders in that province years earlier. He was now being asked to do the same in East Bengal, and for that purpose was given a free hand in the dual role of Governor and Martial Law Administrator.

Tikka Khan's presence, however, did nothing to improve the situation for the government. Rather it was as a red rag to a bull. Bengali defiance became all the more telling.

The government's writ had ceased to function in most parts of the province, and particularly in Dacca, which was the focal point of the struggle. Black flags replaced the Pakistan standard on government offices and other public buildings. The Bangla Desh hymn was played instead of the national anthem over Dacca radio and television stations in compliance with Sheikh Mujib's instructions. The staffers of these government services followed the Awami League leader's orders in open defiance of their superiors from the western wing.

After the daily strikes ended in Dacca at 2 P. M. meetings were held at the stadium and other places. These were addressed by student leaders and office bearers of the Awami League. They became a platform for the announcement of Sheikh Mujib's orders. On one occasion 341 prisoners who had broken out of Dacca jail joined the stadium meeting. Later

they impudently paraded the streets in their jail uniforms as the authorities looked on helplessly.

As the intensity of the movement increased, so did the demand for independence. Soon all eyes were being turned to the racecourse at Dacca, where Sheikh Mujib was expected to proclaim independence on 7 March.

All this was most unnerving to the military establishment in Rawalpindi. Clearly, it had badly miscalculated the Bengali response. Despite the reinforcements already flown in, the West Pakistani military force in the eastern wing was totally inadequate to deal with the upsurge. There were also ominous signs of disaffection among the members of the East Pakistan Rifles, which had hitherto been a key element in the military organization in East Bengal. Topping it all was the imminent threat of a declaration of independence.

This certainly was a crisis beyond all expectations. The President rapidly came to the conclusion that there was need for drastic action and a radical change in plans. Where once the plan was to contain a political outburst and make its cheeky authors tractable by a show of force, the objective would now be to brutally crush a rebellion. Political alternatives did not unduly tax his mind. They smelt too much of defeatism, and for Yahya Khan there was no turning back. He saw the remedy only in terms of applying greater force—a military solution for a political problem.

Once again the intelligence chiefs urged him on. Encouragement also came from Tikka Khan, the man on the spot in Dacca. "Give me enough force and I'll crush them in 48 hours." The President found no fault in the reasoning. It was inconceivable to him that Bengalis would stand up to the hard-hitting Pakistan army. So the die was cast. Whatever the consequences the army would assert itself. The Bengalis would be taught a lesson.

On the afternoon of 5 March Yahya Khan was clear in his mind about what he should do. The strategy would be to provide the necessary force, buy time for the preparations and strike hard at the appropriate moment. Accordingly, he

ordered the massive airlift to begin. Contingency battle orders were enforced. He also went on the air the next day to announce that since the "misunderstanding" about the postponement of the assembly meeting "had become a rallying cry for the forces of disorder" he felt duty-bound as President and Chief Martial Law Administrator to "resolve this unfortunate impasse" and fix 25 March as the new date for the assembly meeting.

I don't think any of the 30 million or 40 million Pakistanis who heard the President's broadcast that day will ever forget the experience. Factually, Yahya Khan could claim he was answering the public demand. But the manner in which the "gesture" was made and the tone of voice left no doubt whatsoever of his real intentions. Here supposedly was an uninvolved head of state trying to clear up the mess created by the politicians—that at least was the brunt of the President's remarks. Yet he had not a single word to assuage outraged Bengali sentiment, nor did he make the slightest effort at reconciliation. Instead, he heaped invective on Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League and snatched away with one hand what he offered with the other. The remark of an esteemed colleague of mine—"He is not serious, he is sending Pakistan to hell"—echoed my own sentiment and those of all my friends in Karachi.

Apparently Yahya Khan was only trying to spike Sheikh Mujib's guns on the eve of the racecourse meeting where he was expected to make a declaration of independence. It was a deliberate gamble. This time at least he did not miscalculate.

Mujibur Rahman, the Awami League Working Committee and its elected members of the national and provincial assemblies fell into the trap. Much to the dismay of people gathered on the racecourse ground, the much-desired declaration was never made. Instead, Sheikh Mujib launched a civil disobedience movement "to achieve self-determination." However crippling and distasteful the movement became to the Yahya Khan regime, it did give it the desired time for the military build-up.

Had the Awami League chief been true to his deserved reputation as a revolutionary leader of the masses, he would have led the million-strong crowd to Eastern Command Headquarters four miles away and demanded and received Tikka Khan's surrender. The people were in the mood for it and would have gladly sacrificed the lives of a few hundred to overwhelm the army. Bangla Desh would have been a reality at a minimum cost—certainly a million would not have subsequently died and countless others made homeless by military brutality.

It would not be the only time that Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League would fail to rise to the occasion by a curious blindness to reality.

Despite the painful evidence accumulating before their eyes and ears he and his associates allowed themselves to be gulled by Yahya Khan into a mad hatter's dance of "negotiations on constitutional formulas" and finally led like sheep to the slaughter. On 25 March, while Yahya Khan was flying back to Karachi after giving the ultimate order and West Pakistani units were taking up positions for the slaughter in Dacca and Chittagong, an Awami League messenger was handing local and foreign newspapermen a signed press release by Sheikh Mujib. "Our talks with the President are over. We have reached agreement on the transfer of power and I hope the President will now make the announcement!" (The exclamation is mine. I have no other comment on this folly.)

On three separate occasions between 3 and 25 March Bengali members of the armed forces approached Sheikh Mujib for guidance because they had no illusions about what was coming. Each time Mujib temporized or turned them away with platitudes. I don't think those brave, self-sacrificing men, who are now leading the battle for their homeland, will ever forget the experience. However much the politicians may try to ride their backs, these men and the equally courageous students who fight by their sides will remain the real heroes of the struggle for Bangla Desh and eventually become the custodians of the new Republic.

Mujibur Rahman's failure to seize the opportunity, offered him on 7 March, was a curious reversal of form. I have known him intimately for many years, and in the summer of 1958 shared hotel rooms with him in Flagstaff, Arizona, Los Angeles and San Francisco. I also vividly recall his daring as a student leader in the early 1950s and a conversation I had with him in the Baluch Regiment Mess on 7 October 1958, the day the army under Ayub Khan's leadership formally took over the administration.

Fed up with the treachery of the Punjabi politicians, the Awami League decided to withdraw support from Malik Feroze Khan Noon and go its separate way. Sheikh Mujib was in a furious temper. "We have to be independent," he said. "We will have our own army, navy and air force. I will see to it." Hours later, when he was winging his way over the subcontinent to Dacca, Ayub Khan took over and Mujib soon found himself behind prison bars again.

By 1971 this astute Bengali leader was perhaps more charismatic but apparently too lost in politics to comprehend the forces he had unleashed. I endorse the remarks of Mohammad Ayoob: "Mujib's failure lay not in the leadership he provided but in his understanding of the objective situation against which he fought.... It was his preoccupation with politics that prevented him from judging the great social implications of the movement he had launched." (*Bangla Desh: A Struggle for Nationhood*, p. 62.)

To return to 7 March, the meeting on the racecourse ground was to mark a dramatic turn in the Bengali struggle. But it was not what the people expected. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had promised a programme of action to achieve "self-determination". But the crowd of at least a million turned up to hear something else: a declaration of independence. East Bengal had seethed with anger for the past week. Meetings held in Dacca and elsewhere in the province made clear that the Bengalis had reached the point of no return. The student leaders, more vibrant to the objective situation, had openly come out for independence. They had in fact given the Awami

League an ultimatum to stand up and be counted with the rest. It was in these circumstances that the people gathered on the racecourse ground to hear Sheikh Mujib speak. And, as if to buttress their determination, they brought with them a variety of weapons—shot guns, swords, home-made spears, bamboo polls and iron rods. Not a policeman was to be seen nor a single military man.

The only evidence of the army was a green-brown helicopter which incessantly hovered beyond the fringe of trees. If this army manifestation did worry some people, they didn't show it. Perhaps the helicopter's crew were the more nervous ones that day. The massive protest they were witnessing from a vantage point was cause for the gravest anxiety. Neither tanks nor guns could stop such a crowd should it choose to move against the army. Gen. Tikka Khan was cognizant of this danger. Hence the helicopter.

On the ground all eyes were centred on the dais where Sheikh Mujib was expected any moment. But Bangla Bandhu, as he was affectionally called, was a long time coming.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was engaged in another emergency meeting of the party's working committee. The meeting had been called at his residence late the previous evening to consider the President's new date for the national assembly meeting. The Awami Leaguers also had to decide whether or not to make the declaration of independence that the people were clamouring for. The pressures for this were extreme. On the one side were the powerful students groups insisting to the point of threat that the Awami League should announce the break with West Pakistan. With them also were the street crowds. Against it was the distinct possibility that the declaration of independence would instantly provoke a savage retaliation by the West Pakistan army in East Bengal now led by the merciless Tikka Khan. Innocent lives would be lost. Perhaps large parts of Dacca and Chittagong would be destroyed. Sheikh Mujib was against bloodshed. Then encouraging them not to take the plunge was Gen. Yahya Khan's apparent capitulation in setting a new date for the assembly meeting.

It seemed to them that Yahya Khan was on the run just as Field Marshal Ayub had been two years earlier. The President had rightly anticipated such ideas would have an irresistible appeal to men naturally pacifist and still hoping to savour the fruits of their victory in the ballot box.

The discussions had taken up the whole night and a major portion of the day. But the Awami League was still undecided. The general tone apparently was against a hasty step which would have such tremendous consequences. Mujib, at last decided to speak out. He said he would make a four-point demand on the President and back it up with a province-wide civil disobedience campaign which would demonstrate the Bengali determination.

They were: (1) The immediate withdrawal of the Martial Law; (2) immediate withdrawal of all military personnel to their barracks; (3) an inquiry into the loss of life; and (4) immediate transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people—i.e. before the Assembly met on 25 March.

The demands were in the nature of a compromise. The objective would remain unaltered—power to the people, withdrawal of the army—but the methods would be non-violent.

Sheikh Mujib's reliance on the success of the civil disobedience campaign underscores that he was fully conscious of the mighty weapon of people's power he had at his disposal. His mistake was a miscalculation of the President's intentions and therefore not making the most practical use of the ultimate weapon.

The Awami League Working Committee did not hesitate to endorse Sheikh Mujib's plan. Apparently it was relieved to find another middle road. But the student leaders waiting outside to hear the decision were openly dismayed. Before going to the racecourse ground, Sheikh Mujib tried to mollify them without visible success.

Sheikh Mujib is a powerful orator. Speaking on the race course ground that day he used everything—the right words, wit, and thunder. But what he had to say did not match the public expectation and though they clapped from time to

time and there were the appropriate cheers, it was clear that he was not getting through to the people. The response certainly didn't match the occasion. When he finished his prepared speech he stood there momentarily silent, gazing at the vast concourse and sensing its disappointment. Then he was the Bangla Bandhu again. Raising his fist he cried out at the top of his voice: "Our struggle this time is a struggle for freedom. Our struggle this time is a struggle for independence. Joi Bangla!"

The crowd went wild. It wasn't exactly what it had come for, but Mujib had spoken of freedom and independence. In this mood they went away resolving to give the fullest expression to the Awami League's civil disobedience programme.

Next day, apart from the army camps, the central government's authority ceased to operate in East Bengal. "People's rule" became the order of the day. The people had already stopped paying taxes into the central and provincial exchequers. According to Sheikh Mujib's instructions on 3 March these were being deposited in two Bengali-owned banks. Now the defiance of the central authority was to be remarkably expanded to cover every sphere of public activity. The Bengalis were supremely disciplined and dedicated in this matter, every man, woman and child making it a question of personal honour to defy the central government and scrupulously follow the dictates of the Bangla Bandhu. Never has there been such a spectacle of civil disobedience. It is not without reason that Khan Wali Khan, a life-long devotee of non-violence, said, "...even Gandhi would have marvelled!"

Sheikh Mujib's 10 directives issued on the racecourse ground on 7 March are reproduced below because they give a vivid picture of the extent of the civil disobedience.

Sheikh Mujib said:

(1) No tax campaign will continue.

(2) The Secretariat, government and semi-government offices, High Courts and other courts throughout Bangla

Desh will observe *hartals* (strikes). Appropriate exemptions will be announced from time to time.

(3) Railway and the ports may function, but railway and port workers will not cooperate if the railways or ports are used for mobilization of forces for the purpose of carrying out repression against the people.

(4) Radio, television and newspapers shall give complete versions of our statements and shall not suppress news about the people's movement otherwise Bengalis working in these establishments shall not cooperate.

(5) Only local and inter-district trunk telephone communication shall function.

(6) All educational institutions shall remain closed.

(7) Banks shall not effect remittances to the western wing either through the State Bank or otherwise.

(8) Black flags shall be hoisted on all buildings every day.

(9) *Hartal* (strike) is withdrawn in all other spheres but complete hartal may be declared at any moment depending on the situation.

(10) A "Sangram Parishad" (revolutionary council) should be organized in each union, mohallah, thana, subdivision and district under the leadership of the local Awami League units. (This covered the whole administrative structure—down to the local parish.)

There was panic in West Pakistan when these directives were implemented on 8 March. Share values on the Karachi stock exchange, particularly the scrips of companies based in East Bengal, dropped rapidly. The big *seths* (business moghuls) were torn by the agonizing decision—should they endanger their persons by flying out to Dacca, Khulna and Chittagong to supervise their mills or should they stay in Karachi and hope for the best. Only one or two of the most daring ones went temporarily to East Bengal. The rest remained in Karachi praying and pestering the government in Rawalpindi to "do something quickly." One big fellow offered to multiply by four the salary of one of his Bengal

officers if he would "go to East Bengal and faithfully look after my business." The offer, I was told, was politely declined. Another Bengali friend of mine took two of his sons to Dacca so that they could witness for themselves "the greatest moment in our history." Such was the scene in Pakistan on 8 March.

The "directives" to the government offices and the banks understandably brought much hardship to the people and gravely endangered the movement of foodstuffs and essential consumer goods. Exports, so vital to the province's economy, came to a halt. So on the evening of 8 March Tajuddin Ahmad, the Awami League's General Secretary and Sheikh Mujib's closest adviser (he is now Prime Minister of the Free Bangla Desh government), issued several "clarifications" and "exemptions" to mitigate public hardship and to prevent damage to the East Bengal economy. These covered banking hours, the operation of road and water transport, and water, gas and electricity services, the distribution of foodstuffs and rice and jute seeds, sanitation services and the operation of the Treasury office for payments to Bengalis. The post and telegraph offices were ordered to operate letter and telegram services only within East Bengal. The only exception was made in the case of foreign press telegrams. This was the only link with the outside world but even here Bengali clerks in the telegraph office took upon themselves to personally censor stories even mildly critical of Sheikh Mujib and the Awami League civil disobedience programme. Tajuddin's "clarifications" and "exemptions" were given the sanctity of holy writ.

The effect of all this was to provide a parallel Awami League government in East Bengal. Pakistan had not known anything like it.

This stupendous display of strength by the Bengalis understandably caused panic among West Pakistanis living in the Eastern Province. The exodus was complicated by the abrupt cessation of steamer services to Karachi. So Dacca airport became a mad house as people scrambled for plane tickets.

They were helped by the army who meanwhile had not been inactive. Pakistan International Airlines, cancelling most of

its international services, concentrated all available aircraft on ferrying "government passengers" to Dacca. These were the troops in civilian dress who were being rushed to East Bengal. The planes operated round the clock. On the return journey they picked up West Pakistanis fleeing to the western wing.

The panic was not without foundation. Despite Sheikh Mujib's clear-cut instructions and the protective efforts of Awami League volunteers, there had been numerous incidents involving non-Bengalis in Chittagong, Khulna, Dacca and some of the smaller towns. Non-Bengali groups were terrified by rumours spread by God knows who that they would soon be "butchered." In this atmosphere of hate and fear every little incident was magnified to atrocity level.

Some of these people had good reason to fear the future. As part of the exploitative group, they had mercilessly bled the Bengalis, treating them with contempt. The Biharis, who came as refugees from India at the time of the partition of the sub-continent and in subsequent communal rioting, had generally kept aloof from the people among whom they had made their homes. They refused to speak Bengali and would converse only in Urdu or English. The attitude of some non-Bengalis was also outrageously provocative. A fellow journalist who had spent the winter months in East Bengal told me on his return how he had been outraged by the spectacle of his hostess, a West Pakistani, deliberately dumping food in the dustbin rather than letting her incredibly poor Bengali servants eat it. Such people would have reason to fear retribution in any society. But this does not justify the brutality subsequently perpetrated on non-Bengali families after the army action started on the night of 25 March.

The civil disobedience campaign was tightened even further on 15 March. It reached a point where not only taxes were being gathered by government officials in the name of the Awami League, but also the whole machinery of the central and provincial government in East Bengal functioned solely by Awami League directives.

People in West Pakistan could not understand the apparent complacency of the central government in these circumstances. There was much talk that Gen. Yahya Khan had failed and, like Field Marshal Ayub Khan, would have to make way for someone else. It then became a guessing game about who would take over. The military establishment was keeping its secret very well! Only the very top officers knew what was being done. But a few others who had been collating the mounting evidence of military movements did suspect the game. Their suspicions never made the newspapers.

Meanwhile in East Bengal the army units from West Pakistan were being subjected to the utmost hardship and humiliation. The troops were denied foodstuffs and daily necessities from the local markets. When they went shopping they were jeered and spat upon. No shopkeeper would sell them anything. Soon they were reduced to the most frugal *dhal roti* (a meal of lentils and hand-made bread), and even this had sometimes to be flown from Karachi by Air Force freighters along with supplies of meat and vegetables.

Recalling those difficult days a Pathan who had been serving with the East Pakistan Rifles in Comilla told me how a group of them was caught in the street by a student mob. "We were made to strip off our pants and march back to the cantonment. Luckily," he added, "most of us had shorts on. Otherwise the disgrace would have been even more terrible."

That man and his friends were to extract a terrible vengeance from their young tormentors after 25 March. I still blow my mind whenever I recall the things they did.

It speaks volumes for the discipline of the West Pakistan army that its officers were able to keep the soldiers in check during what was to them a nightmare of 25 days. When I asked an officer in Comilla how they did it, he replied: "Oh, we kept telling them to be patient and to have faith in the higherups. Even I didn't know what was happening but we were all confident that there was a good reason for us to stay quiet and we did. Now those bastards are sorry for what they did to us."

Perhaps the supreme Bengali insult was delivered to Lt.-Gen. Tikka Khan himself. The General had arrived in Dacca a few days after the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements had started to take up the dual role of Governor and Martial Law Administrator. Governor Ahsan, abruptly dismissed by the President, had left and though Tikka Khan was esconsed in Government House, he had not yet been sworn in. The General, it seems, was too busy with his military hat to worry about the niceties of administrative protocol. Finally, on 9 March Gen. Tikka Khan decided to be formally sworn in as Governor and summoned the Chief Justice of East Bengal for the purpose of administering the oath. Justice Siddiqui very politely declined. So did the other judges of the Dacca High Court. Sheikh Mujib's "directives" were being obeyed even at the top. Tikka Khan was furious but there was nothing he could do. Anyway it really didn't matter. Whatever civil government there was, it was being run by the Bangla Bandhu from his modest double-storeyed bungalo at 32 Dhanmandi. There was, of course, the military side. That came under the Martial Law headquarters where Tikka Khan was already sitting by direct appointment of the President and Chief Martial Law Administrator, Gen. Yahya Khan. So Tikka Khan had to be content with only a military hat till 27 March when the army, having so ruthlessly gone about its savage purpose, was in a position once more to command the services of the Chief Justice.

On 15 March when the civil disobedience movement was at its height, Yahya Khan flew to Dacca. The publicly stated reason was to win a political settlement. In actual fact he was buying more time at a critical moment when even Sheikh Mujib was finding it extremely difficult to resist the demand for a declaration of independence. It was time for Yahya Khan to release another hare.

Had it been serious about a settlement the regime would not have done what it did at that juncture. On 14 March, the day before the President was to arrive in Dacca for talks with Sheikh Mujib, Tikka Khan issued a martial law order

asking government servants and those paid out of the defence budget to report for duty within 24 hours. Failure, the order said, would result not only in dismissal but also prosecution by special tribunal. The expiry of this ultimatum coincided with the President's arrival. It was ignored. So two days later the same order was repeated, this time giving three days notice to those who may have been prevented from joining their duties by the threats of "miscreants." Obviously this provocation would have been avoided if the regime was serious about a settlement. Sheikh Mujib and the Bengalis reacted in the only way they could. The order was defied. It also became the subject of recrimination at the very first meeting Mujib had with the President on 16 March.

More provocations were to come—the idea being to string on the negotiations. One was in the members of the President's party and official "negotiating team." Included in the former was Rizvi, the Director of the Civil Intelligence Bureau, and the man most responsible for hatching the charge against Sheikh Mujib in the notorious Agartala Conspiracy trial in 1968. There was also that other spook much disliked by the Bengalis, Maj-Gen Akbar, Chief of Inter-Services Intelligence. Crowning this was the presence of Lt-Col Hassan who had been one of the prosecutors in the same Agartala Conspiracy Trial. He was included in the team that had to negotiate with Sheikh Mujib and his associates. The excuse was that he was an expert on military law and would be necessary for anything connected with Martial Law regulations.

The President couldn't have chosen a more provocative group to take with him for what ostensibly were the most delicate political discussions undertaken by any Head of State since Pakistan's founding in 1947. There was a predictable reaction from the Awami League chief. He saw those men hanging about an ante-room of the President's suit during his first meeting with Yahya Khan. On returning to his residence, Sheikh Mujib told a friend: "Yahya has brought his monsters with him. Does he expect me to talk to them?"

Sheikh Mujib still anxious to find a peaceful way out of the impasse, did negotiate. But he didn't loose his dignity. He sent Tajuddin, Dr Rahman Sobhan and Dr Kamal Hossain to talk to the official team, reserving himself for "summit" meetings with the President.

The negotiations as such were a farce and not worth recounting. They were never meant to succeed. The talks were just a strategem to give Tikka Khan and the army that additional margin of time they needed to bring in reinforcements from the western wing. The most notable feature was the fact that they never broke down. The end came with the military action on the night of 25 March. Sheikh Mujib was strung along to the last. Even while the President was flying back to Karachi he was led to believe there was a prospect of settlement. The official White Paper on "The Crisis in East Pakistan" is conveniently silent on the collapse of the talks. The best testimony of the government's chicanery comes from Sheikh Mujib's last press release. As mentioned earlier, it said, ". . . we have reached agreement on the transfer of power and I hope the President will now make the announcement." While the foreign correspondents were digesting this piece of naivette in the Intercontinental Hotel the armymen were quietly sitting in their tanks, their armoured cars and their trucks ready to roll at a moment's notice.

All this suggests that Sheikh Mujib and the Awami League leaders were incredibly naive if not unbelievably stupid to allow themselves to be so gulled by Yahya Khan and his officers. I cannot dispute this assessment. The evidence boldly underscores the fact that the Government House in Dacca between 15 and 25 March 1971 was the scene of perhaps the greatest political charade in modern times. The Awami League's curious blindness to reality is all the more odious to those of us in West Pakistan who saw the disaster coming. We were isolated from the moment-to-moment developments by the disruption of the inter-wing communications. In Dacca and elsewhere the Awami League had both visible and audible evidence of the military preparations.

PIA Boeings and Pakistan Air Force C-130s were flying in round the clock with their cargos of fighting men. Dacca airport was a military camp bristling with machine gun nests and anti-aircraft batteries. Tanks were brought in from outlying border districts and converted to soft belts for use in the cities. There was a constant movement of troops. Bengali officers and men of the East Pakistan Rifles and the East Bengal Regiment were systematically broken up into smaller groups. Some were disarmed. The leaders were aware of all this. On 19 March there was a serious clash between West Pakistani militarymen and the people in Joydevpur, 22 miles north of Dacca, when attempts were made to disarm a contingent of the East Pakistan Rifles guarding the Chinese-built Ordinance factory. The official estimates put the casualties at two dead and five injured. The Awami League's own estimate is that 120 people died as a result of the army firing.

As early as 24 February, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was warning his people that "an artificial crisis is being fabricated to sabotage the making of the constitution...." and that "...conspiratorial forces are getting ready to strike again." On 3 March, after the assembly meeting had been postponed and the Bengali non-cooperation movement was on, Sheikh Mujib said, "...it is tragic that planes which might have carried elected representatives from the western wing should instead be engaged in lifting military personnel and arms..."

Despite these ominous signs the Awami League leaders continued to engage themselves in a seemingly endless series of talks with the President and his officers without the simple prudence of contingency planning. Admittedly Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 16 March did exhort his people "...to turn every house in East Bengal into a fortress." He also on 7 March established the "Sangram Parishads" or revolutionary committees throughout the province. The instincts were right but apparently the orders in these matters were not properly translated into action. The hoisting of the Bangla Desh tricolour on the Paltan Maidan on 23 March was indeed a heartwarming sight for Bengalis. It would be now even more satis-

fying had they the prudence to dig a moat around it and to counter, if not to match, the war preparations going on in the military cantonment five miles away. Even at that late hour it would have changed the story of Bangla Desh.

Spectacular as it was the Awami League's civil disobedience campaign lacked the essential ingredient of success. Maximum pressure and minimum preparedness was a costly error. Only the incredible valour and determination of virtually a handful of officers and men of the East Bengal Regiment and the East Pakistan Rifles prevented the West Pakistani military men sweeping the board. They saved the day. Brave men everywhere will salute them.

9. GENOCIDE

We're sorting them out....

MAJOR BASHIR, Comilla

At about 8 P.M. on 25 March 1971, an unidentified cycle rickshaw hastily pulled into the lane leading to 32 Dhanmandi and came to a halt outside Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Dacca residence. The driver was coughing and out of breath. He said he had peddled all the way from the cantonment with an "urgent chit" for Bangla Bandhu. The unsigned message in Bengali was terse: "Your house is going to be raided tonight."

One of those present on the occasion told me it was the first hard news they received of the impending action by the West Pakistan army. President Yahya Khan's unannounced departure earlier in the evening had caused a big stir in the

Awami League camp. When this was followed by ominous signs of military movements, Sheikh Mujib advised his lieutenants to "be cautious" and prepare to go into hiding. The Bangla Bandhu himself refused to take the same precautions. He said he would remain at home, "in my place."

Few Bengalis have seen him since.

Some of his followers kept telephoning his residence every half hour to inquire about his safety. His servant gave an assuring reply. At 1.30 A. M. about two-and-a-half hours after the air had been filled with the sound of guns and the night sky was bright with the glare of flames, Sheikh Mujib's telephone went dead. In mounting panic the word was passed that the army had got Bangla Bandhu.

Recounting the event to me three weeks later and pointing out the bullet holes in the walls, a neighbour told me how Sheikh Mujib had quietly waited for his captors.

At about 1.30 A.M., he said, two army jeeps followed by a few trucks halted outside No. 32. Moments later the garden was swarming with soldiers. Some shots were fired at the roof and through a window on the top floor. The soldiers, he said, were not attacking, just threatening. Then in the commotion Sheikh Mujib was heard calling from an upstairs bedroom: "Why are you being so barbarious? If you had called me I would have come down to you."

Mujib, with a maroon dressing gown thrown over pyjamas, walked down the stairs to where a young captain was standing. My informant said the officer was polite and courteous. "You will come with me, Sir," he said in a firm, flat voice. Then they all drove away.

An hour later after Sheikh Mujib's wife and younger child had fled to an adjoining house, another army truck arrived on the scene. This time the soldiers were not polite at all. They smashed every pane of glass on the ground floor, broke furniture, overturned beds and book-cases. Photographs and pictures ripped from the wall were scattered on the floor. One was a signed picture of Chairman Mao Tse-tung in a light silver frame. I wondered how Mujib had got it. The sol-

diers were not just searching. They were savaging an enemy presence just as a wounded tiger attacks a tree.

I could see the evidence of it all in the middle of April when I called at the house. The only sign of life then was a large grey cat which came out and solemnly looked at us; three hens pecking in the dust and about a dozen pigeons in an assortment of cages behind the house. Bangla Bandhu's home had that haunted aura of abandonment I was to meet time and again in other parts of East Bengal—row upon row of houses, whole villages and towns ghosted by people fleeing the terror. Before departing they had hoisted thousands of green and white Pakistani flags to propitiate the angry war god. As insurance against vandalism the flags would do little for most of the people. Nevertheless they remained there fluttering gaily in the sunshine, a ghostly holiday celebration without people.

The lucky ones had got away across the border into India sometimes with nothing but the thread of life. Others such as Mujib, had been rounded up and had vanished from public view. And then there were those whose bloated bodies, disfigured by bayonet holes and gunshot wounds, were to be found lying in the fields, in ditches and in between coconut palms gently swaying in the breeze.

The country in April had an arresting beauty—a green carpet of knee-high paddy, dotted with small glassy pools and elevated clusters of tiny cottages, spreading all the way to the horizon. On both sides of the road were dazzling patches of red as the flame of the forest came to full bloom. Mango and jackfruit trees were heavy with fruit. The air was filled with the heady perfume of the champa. Nature was at its best. Only man was grotesquely distorted in that unhappy land.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's passivity on that fateful March night was in strange contrast to the violence and bloodshed that had engulfed the East Bengal capital. The army had gone into action moments after the Eastern Command Headquarters had received the signal of the President's safe arrival in Karachi.

That was about 11.30 P. M. By midnight the troops were well into their terrible task. The East Pakistan Rifles quarters at Peilkhana was attacked with tanks, bazookas and automatic rifles. The Rajar Bagh police headquarters was simultaneously visited with a similar experience. In both places the unprepared Bengalis, about 5,000 in all, put up a tough resistance with what they could muster. The outcome, however, was never in doubt. The army had the benefit of surprise, more men and vastly superior fire power. But before they died the Bengali troops gave the army hell. So at least was the grudging admission my escort made as we toured the battered areas.

Elsewhere in the city columns of militarymen with bazookas, flame-throwers, machine guns and automatic rifles, sometimes also supported by tanks, were attacking predetermined targets. One unit went to the offices of the pro-Awami League journal, *The People*, within sight of horrified foreign correspondents grouped on the terrace of the Intercontinental Hotel. The troops opened fire at point-blank range in the narrow alley. Staffers attempting to flee were cut down mercilessly. What was left of the building was doused with gassoline and set ablaze. So ended one "enemy" of the army.

Across the town the *Daily Ithefaq*, a prominent Bengali newspaper, was given a similar treatment. When it transpired that the action had been a "mistake," the army made amends, re-building the premises and with a second-hand press borrowed from somewhere the paper was resurrected.

No such tears were shed for the hundreds of students and their teachers killed in the university hostels and the staff quarters nor for the thousands of Hindus killed in Shankaripatti, Tanti bazaar or in the clusters of houses built around two temples standing in a corner of the sprawling race course ground. In Shankaripatti an estimated 8,000 men, women and children were killed when the army, having blocked both ends of the winding street, hunted them down house by house.

Not far from New Market an army patrol drove to the house of Lt-Com Muazzam Hussain, a prominent Awami Leaguer

and an ex-navy officer who was co-accused with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the Agartala Conspiracy trial in 1968. The unfortune commander was dragged out of his house and brutally killed before the eyes of his horrified wife. As a parting gesture, the soldiers shot up parts of the house. Reports from different parts of the city indicated that other Awami Leaguers and student leaders had been similarly hounded down.

Special targets of military venom were Iqbal Hall, the Muslim students Hostel, and the nearby Jaganath Hall where the Hindu students lived. The army surrounded both buildings and after several minutes of blind firing during which bazookas and automatic weapons were used, the student lodgers were systematically killed at close quarters. The Hindu students were burried in a hastily dug trench outside the hostel compound. The bodies of Muslim students of Iqbal hall were dragged away or left to rot on the roof of the building.

Bengalis fleeing the country, with corroborative evidence from independent outsiders, have described how hundreds of professors, doctors and teachers—the cream of the intellectual set—have vanished overnight after being taken to military centres "for questioning." So has the flower of Bengali youth been scoured away by the dreadful "cleansing process" undertaken by the army.

The bloodbath was to continue in Dacca for 48 hours. In the first daylight hours of 26 March several hundred unsuspecting Bengalis were shot offhand for "violating curfew" although curfew had not been publicly announced. When this was finally done at about 10 A. M. the curfew was used to net the pre-determined targets now restricted to their homes.

It was about this time that the army displayed its teeth in another direction. Bhutto, of all the political leaders who had come to Dacca for talks with Sheikh Mujib, had curiously not been notified to make his departure on the morning of 25 March. He had in fact an appointment with Sheikh Mujib for that evening. Bhutto, apparently tied up with more pressing engagements, telephoned Sheikh Mujib

at about 6 P.M. suggesting they postpone their meeting to next day as he wanted to meet the President. Mujib told him that he had no objection to a postponement, but how did Bhutto expect to see the President when he had already left for Karachi? According to the evidence given by some student leaders, Bhutto was taken aback. He tried to get through to the President's House but was told that the President was "having dinner at the Eastern Command Headquarters" and would not be able to see him. Bhutto, it seems, got the message. Next day he was to get a more pertinent one. Before putting him on a plane for Karachi, his military escort took him on a brief tour of the city where the army was still in action. Bhutto's followers say it had no significance. But another leading politician told me it was intended to give a vivid demonstration of what the army would do to anyone obstructing its purpose. Whatever it was Bhutto could not have been blind or insensitive to what he saw. His public acclamation on his arrival in Karachi, "Pakistan is saved," is perhaps the mis-statement of the century.

Gradually the pattern of the killings began to emerge. Horrified Bengalis suddenly became aware that the West Pakistan army had launched a campaign of *genocide* in East Bengal.

The systematic pattern of the murders throughout the province matches exactly the dictionary definition of genocide. I was to learn later during my visit to the 14th Division Headquarters at Comilla with what beastility and thoroughness the campaign had been planned and was being executed.

There is no doubt whatsoever about the targets of the genocide. They were:

(1) The Bengali militarymen of the East Bengal Regiment, the East Pakistan Rifles, police and para-military Ansars and Mujahids.

(2) The Hindus—"We are only killing the men; the women and children go free. We are soldiers not cowards to kill them..." I was to hear in Comilla.

(3) The Awami Leaguers—all office bearers and volunteers down to the lowest link in the chain of command.

(4) The students—college and university boys and some of the more militant girls.

(5) Bengali intellectuals such as professors and teachers whenever damned by the army as "militant."

When the troops fanned out in Dacca and elsewhere in the province on their grisly task, they carried with them lists of these unfortunate target types. The victims had been noted during the humiliating days prior to 25 March. Now the army was extracting a terrible vengeance.

The Hindus were marked out because the regime considered them to be "Indian agents" who had subverted the Muslims of East Bengal. The Bengali militarymen and police were hunted because they represented the only trained groups which could offer resistance to the army. The others were inscribed as targets for the genocide because it was thought that their political ambitions were a direct threat to the integrity of the state.

The genocide, I was to find out, was the "cleansing process" the military regime intended as a solution of the political problem. Hand and hand with it would go an equally brutal colonization of the province.

"We are determined to cleanse East Pakistan once and for all of the threat of secession, even if it means killing off two million people and ruling the province as a colony for 30 years," I was bluntly told in the 16th Division Headquarters at Comilla.

This was the military regime's "final solution" of the East Bengal problem. Not since Hitler has there been anything so diabolical.

During my sojourn with the army in Comilla area I was to see at first hand the screaming terror of the "kill and burn missions" as Hindus and other target types were systematically hunted from village to village and house to house. I saw whole villages devastated in reprisal for damaging a bridge.

I saw the death sentence given with amazing casuality by a local martial law administrator—the flick of a pencil and another victim is marked "for disposal." And in the army mess at night I heard the otherwise honourable men, all "good chaps," joking about the day's kill and with a friendly rivalry keeping track on the top score. I reported all this in the *Sunday Times* on 13 June 1971. The story of the genocide has since then been unfolded in even greater detail.

The world knows why 8,000,000 Bengali men, women and children have fled across the borders to India? Why at least half a million people have died? Why countless others now face the grim prospect of death by famine and disease?

There is also general knowledge of the unspeakable cruelties visited on thousands of defenceless men, women and children in the violent upsurge of the East Bengalis that followed the campaign of genocide launched by the Pakistan army on 25 March 1971. These horrifying acts—killings, rape and the mutilation of women and children—are understandably an embarrassment to the sensitive people of Bangla Desh now locked in the battle for their homeland. Nevertheless they constitute a fact of life which cannot be ignored. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, I'm sure would condemn them just as he condemned in no uncertain terms the incidents involving non-Bengalis before 25 March.

In the context of assessing guilt the cold blooded programme of genocide undertaken by a professedly civilized government is on a vastly greater level of responsibliity than murders perpetrated by crowds that have blown their minds in a frenzy of anger and frustration. But they do remain murder and as such are equally repugnant to anguished humanity.

It would be invidious for purposes of this book to make a post-mortem on every killing. But I do find it necessary to recount an incident that changed the course of my life.

It happened in Comilla in the third week of April. I was billetted in one of the guest rooms on the top floor of the Circuit House where the local Martial Law Administrator had his office. That morning—it was 19 April—I saw this

worthy casually pass the sentence of death on three Hindus and a Christian "thief" being held in the Comilla jail. The "thief", it transpired, had been caught red-handed taking a bag out of a Hindu residence to the owner who was holed up on the other side of the town. The pencil flicked four times as the Bihari Sub-Inspector was ordered to "bring these men for disposal tonight." We had been enjoying glasses of coconut milk.

That evening I got to know what "disposal" meant.

Just before the curfew was sounded at 6 o'clock, I saw Sebastian and his three companions, all tied loosely by a single rope, march down the street and into the compound of the Circuit House. Minutes later I heard screams and the madding sound of clubs beating on flesh and bone. Then the screaming stopped, as though turned off with a switch. The silence, to my anguished ears, suddenly became the loudest sound in all the world. It has echoed a million times and it still blows my mind.

Buried deep in my torment in the darkened room half an hour later I heard the jawans noisely have their evening meal. I didn't dare to look over the balcony for the sight of men that might had no place in my heart. Then out of the faded light came the flying foxes, the large ungainly bats looking every inch the vampires one sees in Friday night horror films. They slowly flew in across the *jheel* (small artificial lake) behind the Circuit House, wheeled to the right and came to rest on the adjoining mango tree. In my heart I knew that these fruit-eating creatures of the night were not the vampires they looked to be. The real monsters were on the other side of the Circuit House. I had to break away.

The army's brutality in East Bengal cannot find excuse, as some government spokesmen contend, in "justifiable retaliatory action" against mutinous Bengalis to preserve the state and its people. Nor can the killings of the non-Bengalis ever be justified by the army genocide. The evidence has established four things. First, the military action by West Pakistan preceded, not followed, the massacre of non-Bengalis. Second-

ly, an "imminent mutiny" of the Bengali servicemen, as some of us were made to believe, was not planned for 26 March and is therefore no justification for the professedly "pre-emptive strike" the night before. Thirdly, the Nazi-style pogroms were intended, in the context of the ambitions of the present West Pakistani regime, as a military answer to what was essentially a political problem of its own making. Fourth the obliteration of Bengali language and culture is the continuing purpose of the regime.

This is the reality of the rape of Bangla Desh. Not all the propaganda in the world can hide it.

10. GOEBELS REVISITED

...The people of West Pakistan are silent spectators to the genocide....

TAJUDDIN AHMAD, 17 April 1971

No one from West Pakistan can meet a Bengali or for that any informed foreigner without being confronted by complaints such as the one made by Tajuddin, Prime Minister of the free Bangla Desh government, or by the inevitable question: didn't you know what was happening? This has been my own experience prior to the middle of April 1971, and the experience of several others from the western wing, including some top flight politicians, who have travelled abroad since the military horror was let loose in East Bengal on 25 March 1971.

The answer, paradoxically, is both yes and no. But it is

hardly a paradox. Things happen that way in Pakistan, thanks to the inventive, imaginative efforts of the Information Ministry which could more appropriately be called the propaganda department.

The answer is no because for many months, at least till the end of July 1971, the people of West Pakistan had no real knowledge of what was happening in East Bengal. The military regime clamped down a tight censorship on 25 March. From that moment till the end of July when censorship was formally lifted, no newspaper in Pakistan, and this includes Bengali dailies published in East Bengal, carried a single report on anything even remotely near the truth. The government decreed it that way. For the first two months, up to the end of May, press reports from Dacca and elsewhere in East Bengal were only carefully tailored press releases by military and civilian information officers. They emphasized the quick return of "normalcy" in the eastern wing following Sheikh Mujib's civil disobedience campaign, and made out that the army was engaged in a patriotic action against scores of "Indian infiltrators" and assorted groups of "miscreants." The last named were spotty reports so even if one carefully read between the lines it was impossible to get anything like the real picture of what was happening. There was no mention of the brutal army operation in Dacca and Chittagong which by then had taken over 50,000 lives. Nor was there any mention of the fact that the central government's writ was then being observed only in these two places while the rest of the province was under the control of the Bengali resistance. West Pakistanis did not know that the Pakistan Air Force was making regular sorties every day against the Bengali resistance fighters. Nor did they know that the entire East Bengal military units, such as the East Bengal Regiment and the East Pakistan Rifles, the paramilitary Ansars and Mujahids, were in revolt and bravely fighting the West Pakistan army. West Pakistani refugees from East Bengal indeed brought with them stories of Bengali "atrocities" but they gave no information about atrocities being committed by the Pakistan army in its deli-

berate campaign of genocide. Even otherwise well-informed newspaper men were not taken into confidence about the real situation. We were told by the top civilian officers and the interservices public relations that "some action" had been necessary against small, isolated groups. But were otherwise given no clue of the real truth.

Topping the cleverly manipulated press releases were the government-owned radio and TV broadcasts. The immensely popular TV for one, had its usual programmes as though nothing was happening anywhere in the country, and news broadcasts showed East Bengal cities to be "normal" in every way. There was, of course, conflicting information being broadcast by the foreign radio stations, particularly the BBC, All India Radio and Radio Australia. These broadcasts were avidly listened to—almost, it would seem, for salacious pleasure—but curiously the information they gave was dismissed as "propaganda" and deliberate mis-information inspired by India. The government handouts underscored this point and at one time the Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi newspapers were full of official "contradictions"—though the papers themselves had never once published the so-called original "mis-reporting."

Pakistanis are intensely patriotic people and could not for one moment believe that their government was deliberately misinforming them so terribly.

The government did not have such a difficult time doing this. For one thing there has always been a strong anti-Indian bias in the country. Pakistan came into being because the Muslims of the sub-continent revolting against "Hindu domination" wanted a separate homeland. The antipathy has been fostered through the years and given a new vigour after the Pakistan-India war in September 1965. For another, All India Radio's rather cavalier reporting of the events then taking place in East Bengal only served the purpose of confirming Pakistani suspicions about the broadcasts. In the circumstances of such strong anti-Indian sentiment, it was comparatively easy for the government's Ministry of Information

to sell West Pakistanis the idea that they were now being subjected to another act of aggression by India.

This government effort was given a big boost when it became known that the Indian Institute of Strategic Studies had said that India had the "chance of the century" to undo the partition of the sub-continent.

A report to this effect was headlined by all papers and broadcast repeatedly by the radio. With the usual embellishments West Pakistanis were made to believe that not only was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's recent civil disobedience campaign Indian-inspired but that India itself in pursuit of "Akhand Bharat" was about to fall upon Pakistan. Thus the childish statement by the Director of Indian Institute of Strategic Studies, while serving no purpose whatsoever for India, came as a heaven-sent opportunity for the Pakistan government's propagandists.

Under government instructions, in the radio, television and the press the report, in one form or other, was repeated for several days. With it came incubated "reaction" from public leaders and indignant editorial comment in the newspapers. The news had almost two weeks exposure. At the end of that period there were few West Pakistanis who were not convinced that India was up to some "mischief" and that it was their patriotic duty to help the government in "this new hour of crisis," as one newspaper exhorted.

It must be remembered that at that time the people of West Pakistan were completely isolated from the rest of the world. The blanket censorship prevented foreign newspapers and periodicals coming unchecked into the country with contrary information. If any of these publications had even a small reference to the events in East Bengal they were seized and burnt. The government's efforts in this matter were so pervasive that the customs authorities searched all in-coming passengers, Pakistani and foreign nationals, and confiscated any press cuttings or newspapers carrying reports of the army action.

Having successfully closed the people's eyes and ears to

outside influences, the government launched an inventive propaganda campaign redoubling its effort to distort the truth from East Bengal and to maximize the "imminent threat" from India. Goebels couldn't have done better.

When I was taken to East Bengal with some of my journalist colleagues in the middle of April we were instructed to "boost the army" and to make much of the "normalcy." We were also informed that we would be given opportunity to see the "effects of Indian infiltration." By then Dacca city had been tidied up by the army. But the military authorities could not fill the streets or cover up all the signs of devastation, nor for that matter plug the mouths of our Bengali contacts. The visit to Dacca therefore came as a painful eye-opener to all of us. I remember one of my colleagues who had reached Dacca two days earlier, telling me in a hushed voice: "They have massacred the Hindus and wiped out the Bengali intelligentsia." Nevertheless this reporter, who is a star member of a news-agency's staff, was reporting the opposite in his despatches to Karachi. So were the Radio and TV camera men.

One of these cameramen, a young and extremely "patriotic" lad, accompanied me on my Comilla visit. He outdid even the army propagandists in proving black was white. His job was to show the return of normalcy. And he did it even if he had to carefully arrange all the props. On one occasion when visiting Laksham, a small town north of Comilla that had been "liberated" by the army only a day earlier, we found it to be a ghost town like the others we had seen elsewhere. But Laksham was an important railway junction and it had to be proved that the railway was operating even if it was not. So my friend with army assistance had a two-bogey train pull out of the station and bravely recorded the event. Similarly he was able to stage a "mammoth demonstration" by the local "peace committee." This body was non-existent at the moment of our arrival. But the army Major in charge of the "cleansing operation" has a powerful magic. An old man, who swore he was an "old and faithful Muslim Leaguer" was told to gather a crowd. The man, thanking his lucky

stars to be of use to the army, said he would need three to four hours to gather "one to two hundred men." The Major gave him half an hour and sent a jawan with him to ensure success. Five minutes after the allotted time we heard shouting in the distance. Moments later a motley crowd of old men and very small children marched down the street waving Pakistani flags and shouting patriotic slogans at the top of their voice. The peace committee had arrived. It did not matter that there were hardly fifty people, children included. The TV cameraman could handle his camera well. So he crowded them in front of the police station and filed a "big public meeting." Then he marched them up and down the narrowest lane he could find, adroitly tilting his camera to focus only on the procession. Four days later Karachi TV was showing the "return of normalcy" in Laksham. It was the same in Chandpur, in Agartala, Chittagong and Sylhet. Apart from Chittagong, all the others were ghost towns. Their people had fled into the countryside and then across the border into India.

In the weeks to come teams of West Pakistani reporters, carefully screened by the authorities, were to make similar visits to East Bengal to "report" on the situation. The Bengali journalists were excluded because they were "undependable." Even the senior Bengali correspondents of West Pakistani papers were not allowed to function. I was told that the Awami League had successfully "brainwashed" them and as such they were of no use to the government. I have never seen a people so humiliated.

The government's management of the press was not a new phenomenon. Since 1958 when Field Marshal Ayub Khan took over the administration, the press has been an extension of the government's Ministry of Information. The only independent English language daily in the country, the *Pakistan Times*, was taken over by the government and deliberately destroyed. Other newspapers were no problem at all. Most of the proprietors found it convenient to the government line if they were to stay in business or succeed in their other

business ventures. So did the editors. A single lapse in the form of "unfair criticism"—anything even mildly critical of the big man—was immediately visited with the government's wrath. It reached a point when the editors were outdoing the Information Ministry in its propaganda effort.

One editor, I vividly recall, who presided over one of the leading national dailies, maintained a duplicate register in his office. On one side he listed all "pro-government reports," on the other were the details of reports discrediting opposition leaders. Bhutto was then among the latter and considerable space was devoted by my friend in chronicaling anti-Bhutto stories. The duplicate register, in the form of a monthly report, was sent to the Chairman of the Press Trust "for information." He also made it a point to daily send clippings of pro-government stories to the appropriate officers marked "with the compliments of the Editor." This worthy, who is now one of the star political commentators on the government-owned television network, had a big sweat retrieving his registers and "monthly reports" when the elections once more brought Bhutto to prominence.

The Awami League in its own way helped the government to distort the picture. For one thing Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's stolid refusal to visit West Pakistan after the elections enabled the government to damn him as anti-West Pakistani and a "separatist." Had Mujib visited the western wing after his stupendous election victory, he would have been given a tremendous reception and thus effectively countered the government propaganda so insidiously spread among the educated groups. For another, the Awami League put many restrictions on inter-wing communication during its great civil disobedience movement. Thus East Bengal was effectively isolated from the rest of the country and the impression of "separatism" was confirmed.

The government propaganda in the first few months of the military action in East Bengal has been so telling that even after the true picture was known in West Pakistan, the people there refused to believe that it was anything but a fully deserved

retaliation against those who have sought to break up the country. They are fully convinced that whatever has been done is for the patriotic purpose of preserving the nation's unity and integrity against the mischief of "Indian agents" and "infiltrators."

A case in point was the reaction of a Punjabi lady, a good friend of the family, who is known for her dignity and compassion. When I told her about what the army was doing in East Bengal, she retorted: "They deserve it. If they want independence they must be prepared to die for it."

Some of those who have been dear to me have similarly damned me as an "Indian agent" and condemned me for my "sell-out". When I wrote the story of the genocide in the *Sunday Times* I received from them a final communication in the most abusive terms. They were sincere in what they believed, they could not be anything else, but the reaction was nonetheless frightening. How can I, let alone the Bengalis, expect anything better from other West Pakistanis? Goebels, I repeat, couldn't have done better than the government of Pakistan's propagandists.

Even if there were some people still left in West Pakistan who have some compassion for the Bengalis and desire a reconciliation—I have no doubt that some still remain—they are in no position to air their views. Even the slightest criticism of the government's action will bring down the wrath of hell. In these circumstances the West Pakistanis must remain silent spectators. I cannot justify their silence. But I can understand it.

11. WHY 8 MILLION MAY DIE?

. . . A human disaster of unimaginable proportions. . . .

BERNARD BRAIN, MP

Within the six-month period between November 1970 and April of the following year, East Bengal was visited by two great disasters. The first was the greatest natural calamity of the century when a monstrous cyclone and tidal wave swept the crowded coastal areas killing an uncounted number of people. The second was man-made—an unbelievably brutal campaign of genocide undertaken by the West Pakistan regime as a military answer to a political issue of its own creation. More than eight million destitute Bengalis have already fled the land across the border to India. More are on their

way. Even a moderately accurate estimate of the death toll will never be known. Thousands of people have vanished—just as others did in the tidal wave last November.

Now disaster has struck a third time.

East Bengal is already in the grip of a famine which threatens to be even greater than the Great Bengal Famine of 1943 when three million died. According to some projections, the present famine, due to the circumstances of the civil war, could leave a long shadow over both Pakistan and India, killing or sharply reducing the life expectancy of eight million people. It is indeed a human disaster of unimaginable proportions.

Evidence that the famine is already a reality is provided by the emaciated bodies of men, women and children—some just human bags of skin and bone—painfully making their way across the border into India. The first two waves of refugees were destitute and diseased, but did not have their bodies as worn down as those now crossing the border. Quite obviously the inevitable fall-out from the tidal wave and the civil war is beginning to be felt in East Bengal. The calamity is made doubly tragic by the Pakistan government's refusal to admit the famine. Such admission would not only be a confession of guilt but would also invite closer international attention to the continuing military brutality in East Bengal. So the people must die. In a traditionally backward area, now haunted by the spectre of famine, food is being used as an instrument of politics to coerce the remaining 66,000,000 Bengalis into submission. I have heard with unbelieving ears a non-Bengali officer connected with agricultural development bluntly say, "the famine is the result of their acts of sabotage. So let them die. Perhaps then the Bengalis will come to their senses." Such official attitudes compound the already grave problem of food shortage.

In normal times 17 of the 23 districts of East Bengal have a food deficit. Even when the crops are good, the province imports approximately 1.5 million tons of foodgrains, mainly rice. Recurring floods and cyclonic storms have in the recent

past made for much larger food imports. The devastating cyclone in November 1970 struck when the major *aus* crop was being harvested. Not only did it destroy substantial portions of that crop, but salinization, as a result of the accompanying tidal wave, made it impossible for large areas in the coastal districts to grow the normal rice quotas.

Added to this natural disadvantage is the continuing civil war. The Bengali upsurge against the army action last March devastated the communication system of the province as no cyclone has ever done. Bridges and roads were blown up by the Bengali guerillas in an effort to tie down the West Pakistan army and in many places of this riverine province, the essential river ferries were obliterated. In April 1971, the key trunk road linking the food port of Chittagong with the distribution centres in the North was impassable due to more than 100 acts of sabotage in a single 30 mile stretch near Feni. Eighty-five per cent of the food imports were carried by train and trucks operating on this route. The other fifteen were shipped in barges. Even these were not easily available due to the movement of military supplies. As a result foodgrains were piled high in the silos of Chittagong port while people went short in other parts of the province. The trunk road from Chittagong to Comilla has since been repaired but as it is still subjected to attacks by guerillas, traffic is only a fraction of the normal.

There were similar hold-ups elsewhere in the province. A survey conducted by an international agency last summer indicated that 60 per cent of the available foodgrains were stored in the south where the demand was only 30 per cent of the provincial total. Distribution continued to be hampered by dislocation of the communication system, notably the railways and river barges still suffering the effects of scorch-the-earth action. In these circumstances supplies to the West Pakistan army became the first demand on the civil and martial law authorities. Other consumer requirements were met on the basis of availability. Inevitably the people went short.

By September 1971, two other obstructive factors began to operate. The first was the shortage of rice seed and agricultural in-puts for the *aus* crop. These were not easily available due to the collapse of the administration and the reluctance on the part of the farmers who were left to part with their own stocks.

The second was hoarding. Hoarding has been a traditional practice of growers in any food-short year. Understandably they desire to ensure their own supplies. So do the more affluent groups in the cities who are willing to pay any price for stocks of foodgrains.

A third factor becoming increasingly intrusive is the decline in purchasing power of millions of people already living on the starvation line.

Coming together at the present, all these factors threaten to make the winter of 1971 another period of disaster.

During the Third Five-Year Plan period, 1966 to 1970, East Bengal while producing an average of 10.8 million tons of foodgrains per year, still had an annual shortage of 1.2 million tons. Recurring disasters—floods in September 1970, the devastating cyclone in November and the crippling military action from March 1971—have caused a 20 per cent reduction in the anticipated crop yield in 1971. Two consecutive bad years have made for a shortage of 2.28 million tons or the greatest food deficit since the Great Bengal Famine 28 years ago.

All this has the makings of an unparalleled human disaster yet the Pakistan government refuses to admit it and as a result international relief agencies find themselves unable to move effectively.

Unsupervised relief in the circumstances obtaining in that country at the present time would be like pouring water into sand. Food stocks will disappear, either commandered by the military or siphoned by corrupt officials and unscrupulous traders for sale on the black market.

International food relief to achieve its intended purpose will have to be internationally supervised. The contenders in the civil war must also be required to cooperate in not obstruct-

ing food distribution. Otherwise the gloomy projections will become a reality in the difficult months and years ahead. A famine of such dimensions could be more devastating than the other disasters that have struck East Bengal.

12. WHY BANGLA DESH?

Pakistan is now dead and buried under a mountain of corpses.

TAJUDDIN AHMAD
Prime Minister of Bangla Desh, 17 April 1971

Pakistan in its present form was killed by the West Pakistan bourgeoise when its armed forces struck against East Bengal on 25 March 1971. Pakistan will never be the same again.

HARPAL BRAR
Statement on the Maoist position at a meeting of the Association of Communist Workers, London, 9 July 1971

The answer to the question—Why Bangla Desh?—must be sought within the framework of Pakistan's founding premise. Simply stated, the *raison d'etre* for the creation of Pakistan was the desire of the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent for

a separate homeland to avoid domination by the Hindus, who constituted the majority community, when the British withdrew. The two communities had a long-standing antipathy, in some sections to the point of hatred. All the parties concerned—the British, the Hindus and the Muslims—conceded in 1947 that a separation was unavoidable. Hence Pakistan was created on the premise of Hindu-Muslim hostility. Once this was conceded to the Muslim League, which championed the cause of partition, it became a question of giving an ideological shape to the new state. In Pakistani eyes India was Hindu and Pakistan was Muslim.

The events of March 1971 and later have disrupted both the founding premise and the ideological motivations of Pakistan.

After being subjected to more than two decades of exploitation and humiliation and now the ultimate brutality of genocide, 60 per cent of the people of the Muslim state living in the eastern wing are not only totally alienated from their compatriots in the western wing, but have also been forced to look to "Hindu" India for protection and refuge against the savagery of their co-religionists and countrymen. To those living in the sub-continent this spectacle is a mockery of the whole concept of Pakistan. The founding premise is shattered, so also the Pakistan ideology. Islam cannot countenance the practice of Muslims brutalizing and annihilating other Muslims within the land intended as a haven for the religion. Nothing can stop the 75,000,000 Bengalis from going their separate way.

Thus Bangla Desh has become a reality. The formal separation of East Bengal from West Pakistan is only a matter of time. Mentally and emotionally the break is already complete.

The responsibility for this development lies entirely with the present military regime presided over by Gen. Yahya Khan.

Gen. Yahya Khan's ambition to preserve his own position and the supremacy of the army over everything else in Pakistan led him to attempt an inventive fiddling of a constitution in

the national assembly which he had carefully tailored for a political deadlock. The decisiveness of the election results was a painful setback to this plan, but it in no way altered or diminished the objective. The technique was changed. Inter-wing rivalries were fostered to precipitate an East Pakistan-West Pakistan confrontation. When that failed to budge Sheikh Mujib and the Awami League, the government undertook a reckless military adventure to achieve its ambition.

The postponement of the assembly meeting on 1 March 1971 was the beginning of the end. The end itself came 25 days later when the army was ordered to undertake a final solution of the East Bengal problem. It meant annihilating opposition and by the permanent colonization of the province by West Pakistan—with the President and the army sitting on top of it all.

It was the military regime that undermined the concept of an united Pakistan after the elections in December 1970. The elections had been conducted on the basis of population, one man one vote irrespective of the region he lived in. This helped to bridge the geographical separation. President Yahya Khan himself made this possible by dispensing with the "parity" formula which balanced East and West representation in the central legislature. The new dispensation did not stipulate that political parties must have intra-regional representation. For party purposes the whole country was one.

This idea was abruptly reversed after the elections. The Awami League, coming in with a clear mandate from more than half the country's population, legitimately aspired to provide a constitution on the basis of its manifesto and to take over the administration. Gen. Yahya Khan would not allow it. He told the Awami League that since it did not win a single seat in West Pakistan, it was only a Bengali Party and that it would have to come to an understanding on a constitutional formula with the major party in West Pakistan before the assembly could meet to write the constitution. In effect the President was saying that East and West had separate, conflicting interests and that one man one vote had been a

joke. His absurd reasoning not only negated democratic practice but also denied the unity of the state. The Bengalis therefore cannot be blamed if they later took the cue from the President.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has been tried—and undoubtedly will be found guilty by the military tribunal—of treason and attempting to disrupt the integrity of the state. He is innocent of guilt. The real guilt lies elsewhere, with the military regime.

To the very last the Awami League chief had patiently and courageously, albeit naively, worked for a democratic political settlement which alone could preserve the unity of Pakistan. On 22 March 1971, Khan Abdul Wali Khan, the National Awami Party leader had asked him, "Sheikh Sahib, tell me do you still believe in an united Pakistan?"

Mujib replied: "Khan Sahib, I'm a Muslim Leaguer." The implications of Mujib's reply was that he was gently rebuking Khan Wali Khan who had opposed the partition of the sub-continent in 1947 (as did the Jamat-i-Islami which now claims to be the custodian of Pakistan's ideology) while reminding him that not only did he, Mujib, support the Pakistan movement but was still today loyal to its concept.

It has been suggested that Sheikh Mujib's devotion to the unity of Pakistan led him to court arrest on 25 March when the army struck in Dacca. He could have easily escaped with the rest of the Awami League hierarchy to lead the armed struggle for independence. He urged his followers to go underground but for his own part chose to passively submit to arrest because he did not want to dismember the state. I do not subscribe to this theory and only mention it because it is an interesting point of view supporting Mujib's patriotism.

In the context of the West Pakistani military action, and Sheikh Mujib's trial, it is again worth noting what Professor G.W. Choudhury remarks: "We hope that there will be no such thing called East and West Pakistan in the federal legislation. This will instead develop on the basis of parties. Whichever party comes to power this general distinction we hope will not remain. So there is no question of East Pakistani mem-

bers forming one single group in confrontation—if that comes then it means that the State comes to an end." (*The Pakistan Society Bulletin,* No. 31, p. 53, London, 10 September 1970.)

It is now evident that Gen. Yahya Khan's regime did not accept the verdict of one man one vote. It deliberately precipitated an East Pakistan-West Pakistan confrontation for its selfish purposes and brought an end to the state.

Clearly then it is the guilty party, not Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It should be on trial now instead of the Awami League chief. West Pakistanis, because of their support to President Yahya's regime, cannot escape their share of the guilt. They may not accept this. But the world as a whole has no illusions in the matter of who is to blame for the disruption of Pakistan.

For many months now outraged international opinion has been attempting to pressurize a political settlement in Pakistan. The objective is to halt the continuing military brutality and thus allow the eight million Bengali refugees in India to return safely to their homes in East Bengal.

But, is a political settlement possible? I am personally convinced that no political settlement is possible within the ambit of a united Pakistan. The total alienation of the 75,000,000 Bengalis has made an independent Bangla Desh a fact of life. Bengalis everywhere insist there can be no reconciliation with West Pakistan. For their part the West Pakistanis have not had a word of compassion for the Bengalis and apparently are incapable of initiating reconciliation. The clock cannot be turned back to the pre-March 25 situation in the unlikely event of Sheikh Mujib being released by the army and installed at the head of the administration in Dacca. Not even Bangla Bandhu could get the Bengalis to accept an united Pakistan after their experiences since 25 March.

The only settlement the Bengalis will accept is an independent Bangla Desh. In that event there still would be no chance of it having political and economic ties with West Pakistan. The hatred between the two is too deep for that.

At the same time no one in any position of authority in

West Pakistan can agree to the idea of the amputation of the eastern wing. This is all the more true of the army, still the dominant power in the country. The West Pakistan army has suffered heavy casualties in its "cleansing operation" in East Bengal. They already are far greater than the losses in the September 1965 war with India. On no account will it swallow these losses and quietly return to its home in West Pakistan. The West Pakistan army will have to be defeated in the field before it will leave East Bengal.

Any talk of the separation of East Bengal would be suicidal for any politician living in West Pakistan. The experience of Kashmir has made that a certainty. For 23 years no government in the country has dared to "go soft" on Kashmir. As such the suggestion of an Independent East Bengal would be even more unthinkable. It would invite instant retalliation by the army. This applies equally to Gen. Yahya Khan's regime. He is riding a tiger.

Should the regime, by some miracle, agree to the independence of East Bengal, it would automatically stir up a similar demand from three of the four provinces of West Pakistan. Khan Abdul Wali Khan of the National Awami Party has bluntly said on many occasions, "If there are to be two Pakistans, there will be five." The Baluchis, Sindhis and Pathans have always resented Punjabi domination just as the Bengalis have done. For fifteen years they struggled against the integration of West Pakistan (One Unit as it is popularly known) to the point where Yahya Khan had to concede the demand and dismantle the One Unit in the summer of 1970. During the elections, these provinces were carefully watching Sheikh Mujib. The acceptance of his six-point demand for provincial autonomy would have also given them the much-desired relief from Punjabi domination. The National Awami Party and some independent Sindhi politicians publicly supported Sheikh Mujib's manifesto and they would have joined him in framing a constitution on the basis of the six points. The military action in East Bengal has for the moment silenced the separatist forces in the western wing. The centrifugal tenden-

cies however remain and should at any stage East Bengal formally go its separate way, they will make identical breaks in West Pakistan.

The military regime is painfully aware of this. Its efforts have been to keep these provinces together at all costs. To this end there has been some informed speculation about a political union between Pakistan and Iran on the lines of the confederation of Egypt, Libya and Syria. Three reasons are advanced for this proposal.

First, it is felt that a union with the adjacent Iranian territory will help the regime to offset the separatist pressures that are building up in the North West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, and Sind. These provinces are increasingly restive because of the continued denial of civilian rule. It is thought that a union with Iran would help to anchor them more securely. Secondly, it will, to some extent, offset the ravages to the economy caused by the continuing war in East Bengal and particularly the virtual loss of that rich market. Thirdly, it would give Pakistan much greater defence in depth in the event of hostilities with India. A fourth consideration only whispered about is the hope that Pakistan could have liberal assistance from Iran in the form of foreign exchange so vital to industry and the army.

This "union" is not a new idea. Early in 1958, the government of Pakistan under the direction of President Iskander Mirza actively canvassed the idea of a confederation with Iran and Afghanistan. The intention then was to jointly promote economic development and to buttress each other's security. Nothing came of it because both the Shah of Iran and the King of Afghanistan were understandably suspicious of "Big Brother." The idea was again mooted in 1970 during the elections. Significantly this time it came from Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan whose Muslim League group was receiving strong under-cover support in its election campaign. The kite fell to the ground without much fuss. Now it's flying again helped by rumours emanating from the direction of Rawalpindi. It has been suggested that President Yahya Khan

during an unscheduled visit to Iran in September 1971 sounded out the Shah about this idea. The Shah's reaction is not known, if at all a formal proposal was made to him. But clearly he has nothing to gain and everything to loose by taking on the burden of a crippled Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan government has found it necessary to make an elaborate show of democratic window dressing. The military action in East Bengal caused the collapse of the rich jute trade. It has disrupted the economy and has become an impossible financial burden to the country. Topping it is the denial of foreign economic assistance by a world outraged by the military brutality. All this has resulted in an unprecedented financial crisis. The government is not only scrapping the bottom of the financial barrel, but it is also finding itself embarrassingly short of rupee funds. The 1971-72 national budget showed drastic economies to the point where the residential telephones of officers below the rank of joint secretary were recalled and annual increments of all government employees, the armed forces included, have been given in the form of national savings certificates. Desperate measures were required to meet this desperate situation. The easiest and least painful was whitewash. Unfortunately for the government it has not fooled anyone, but only showed up more clearly its own political bankruptcy.

First, public promises were made on 28 June 1971, that power would be transferred to civilian governments in the centre and the provinces "in about four months time." When October drew near, the deadline was extended to December. The excuse was that by-elections were necessary to fill the vacancies caused by the disqualification of about eighty Awami Leaguers who have been "found guilty" of treason and anti-state activities. The regime is finding it difficult to get new candidates because few Bengalis will risk the wrath of their people by publicly collaborating with the West Pakistan military regime. Undoubtedly there will be further postponements.

Pakistanis have been given a vivid glimpse of what the

President means by the "transfer of power." Where constitution-making was once the primary responsibility of the newly elected public representatives, Yahya Khan now says he finds it necessary to present a constitution to the nation. His public statements underscore the dramatic reversal after the elections. On 26 March 1969, President Yahya Khan said: "It will be the task of these elected representatives to give the country a workable constitution and find a solution of all the other political, economic and social problems that have been agitating the minds of the people."

On 28 June 1971, the President told the country that its elected representatives were incapable of fulfilling their primary purpose and as such, "I find that there is no other alternative for me but to have a constitution prepared by a group of experts."

The true nature of this constitution is exposed by his subsequent statement: "This constitution will be subject to amendments by the national assembly on the basis of the amending procedure as will be laid down in the constitution itself. The constitution will be based on a careful study of a number of constitutions and also based on the aspirations of the people of the various regions of Pakistan as assessed by me over the last two years."

What then, it could be asked, was the purpose of the elections in December 1970?

I can think of no better way of assessing the "aspirations of the people." The election results showed beyond doubt what the people wanted. Nevertheless President Yahya Khan cannot stomach this public expression and finds it necessary to revert to his own private formula to get the answers.

He wants a constitution of his own choosing, one specifically designed to ensure his own position and the supremacy of the army. Pakistanis will be made to swallow it. But this cannot happen for long. Field Marshal Ayub Khan did the same thing in 1962 and dismally failed. Gen. Yahya Khan can hardly hope to succeed, particularly when the people have had their first taste of democracy in the elections.

Further insight into the true nature of the so-called movement towards democracy is obtained by the installation of the civilian government in East Bengal under the new governor, Dr A.M. Malik. Dr Malik is a man for all seasons. He has the rare distinction of having held some sort of office under every government since the founding of the state. He will no doubt be appropriately submissive to Gen. Yahya Khan's military regime and the perfect front man for Lt.-Gen. Niazi who, as Martial Law Administrator, still has overriding authority. It is also rather curious that Gen. Yahya Khan has no difficulty in giving "civilian rule" to war-torn East Bengal while he finds it impossible to do the same in West Pakistan. There Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province continue to labour under the tight reins of their military governors. It is no wonder that even Bhutto called it "white-wash."

The prospects for Pakistan can be summed up as follows:

West Pakistan. Increasing disenchantment with Gen. Yahya Khan's regime and a growing opposition to the continued denial of representative government. There will be growing unrest in the border areas such as Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province, and the Paktoonistan demand (a separate state for the Pathans) will be pressed.

The unprecedented economic crisis is equally dangerous for the military regime. It has put an intolerable impost on the already overburdened people. Soaring prices, diminishing availability and rising unemployment could lead to serious labour and student unrest. In such a situation a spark could touch off the upsurge of the kind that toppled Field Marshal Ayub Khan. All this could come to a head in the winter months when Gen. Yahya Khan would be most vulnerable. The danger of war with India would then be extreme because the President, anxious to unite what is left of the country, would be more disposed to undertake another reckless adventure. Claire Hollingworth of the *Daily Telegraph* has suggested a "coup by Christmas." While this is always a possibility,

a revolt within the army will only follow a general understanding among the officer cadre that not only has Gen. Yahya Khan failed, but that he is also selling them out. That, it seems, is still to come. But the situation could change. If it comes it will be a bloody event, more like the Iraqi experience than the gentlemanly changing of chairs as the practice has been in Pakistan.

East Bengal. The expansion of the guerilla movement against a backdrop of the continuing horror of the military action. The guerillas constitute a more formidable threat than the first unconcerted resistance to the army in April and May. But apparently they are not yet fully organized for they have not taken the fullest advantage of the monsoons. This is bound to change in the coming months and then the action will probably be more expansive and telling. For both sides it will be a war of attrition which could be over-taken by the escalation of the conflict by more explosive factors, such as the continuing influx of refugees into India and the eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation by the Indian and Pakistan forces along the Bengal frontier and in the West.

It would be futile to hazard a guess about the outcome of such a development. There are too many uncertain factors. But the Bangla Desh struggle does hold out some interesting possibilities.

Foremost of these is the question: Can the Awami League provide effective leadership for the long struggle ahead?

However sincere it may be in its determination to press on with the armed struggle to its logical conclusion, the party's record does not inspire much confidence. I have had this from any number of Bengalis, young and old, who still visibly shudder when recalling the dismal events between 1 and 25 March 1971. The Awami League proved then it could galvanize a mass upsurge but not give it the cutting edge so vital for success.

Maximum pressure and minimum preparedness have yet to win victories for oppressed peoples. The Awami League was guilty on this account. Its political naivette and the failure

to take opportunity by the horns on 7 March 1971 has cost the Bengalis dearly. Undoubtedly they have forgiven it, but they cannot be so foolish as to forget the mistakes of the past. Nor will the Bengali troops, who constitute the hard core of the Mukti Bahini, or the militant student leaders forget how they were given neither encouragement nor direction by Sheikh Mujib during the critical days of March. Unless it radically changes its posture I cannot see how the freedom fighters can for long carry the party on their shoulders.

This, of course, is an arm-chair assessment from a long way off. Since the end of April I have not had the opportunity to visit the border areas of Bengal and I could be totally wrong. But there will be no disputing the implications of the Bangla Desh struggle.

First, a revolutionary situation calls for revolutionary responses. The form of the struggle and its complexion will be influenced by the direction from which the most vibrant and vigorous of these responses come. Unless the Awami League shows itself to be more dynamic and practical and to have more stomach for the fighting it may one day awaken to find that the torch has been grabbed by others waiting expectantly in the field.

Secondly, Bangla Desh is too big, too explosive and has too many outcroppings to be either swept under the carpet of international opinion or to be painlessly swallowed by all the parties concerned. Each of its aspects—the refugees, famine, the genocide, the total alienation of the millions of Bengalis, the shattering effects independence would have on West Pakistan—by themselves are major international problems. Together they constitute a greater disaster and a graver threat to peace than Biafra and Vietnam or anything this generation has known. And if by some miracle all these problems are tidily settled, how do you feed, shelter, clothe and make happy 75,000,000 people in a devastated land whose hopes of survival are tied to jute and when the bottom has fallen out of the market for the golden fibre due to undependable supplies and the onslaught of synthetics?

We are only just entering a new area of darkness. It will be a long time before the light begins to show at the end of the tunnel.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

Pakistan shall be a federation granting full autonomy on the basis of the six-point formula to each of the federating units:

Point No. 1

The character of the government shall be federal and parliamentary, in which the election to the federal legislature of the federating units shall be direct and on the basis of universal adult franchise. The representation in the federal legislature shall be on the basis of population.

Point No. 2

The federal government shall be responsible only for defence and foreign affairs, and, subject to the conditions provided in Point No. 3.

Point No. 3

There shall be two separate currencies mutually or freely convertible in each wing for each region, or in the alternative,

a single currency, subject to the establishment of a federal reserve system in which there will be regional federal reserve banks which shall devise measures to prevent the transfer of resources and flight of capital from one region to another.

Point No. 4

Fiscal policy shall be the responsibility of the federating units. The federal government shall be provided with requisite revenue resources for meeting the requirements of defence and foreign affairs, which revenue resources would be automatically appropriable by the federal government in the manner provided and on the basis of the ratio to be determined by the procedure laid down in the constitution. Such constitutional provisions would ensure that the federal government's revenue requirements are met consistently with the objective of ensuring control over the fiscal policy by the governments of the federating units.

Point No. 5

Constitutional provisions shall be made to enable separate accounts to be maintained of the foreign exchange earnings of each of the federating units, under the control of the respective governments of the federating units. The foreign exchange requirement of the federal government shall be met by the governments of the federating units on the basis of a ratio to be determined in accordance with the procedure laid down in the constitution. The regional governments shall have power under the constitution to negotiate foreign trade and aid within the framework of the foreign policy of the country, which shall be the responsibility of the federal government.

Point No. 6

The government of the federating units shall be empowered to maintain a militia or paramilitary force in order to contribute effectively towards national security.

APPENDIX 2

An appeal to "my West Pakistani brethren" by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the conclusion of his six-point formula, Our Right to Live, Dacca, February 1966:

I want to submit a few words to my West Pakistani brethren:

"Firstly, they should not run away with the idea that whatever I have stated [in the six points] I have done in the interest of East Pakistan only. It is not so. In each [point] of my six-point programme is inherent a corresponding benefit to my West Pakistani brethren. They are sure to derive equal benefit out of their implementation.

"Secondly, when I speak of East Pakistan's wealth being flown to and concentrated in West Pakistan I only mean regional concentration. I do not, thereby, mean that this wealth has reached the masses of West Pakistan. No. I do not and cannot mean that. I know there are millions like us

in West Pakistan who also are unfortunate victims of this economic exploitation. I also know that the entire wealth of the country is concentrated in the hands of a few families. This will continue till the capitalistic pattern of our society is changed. But before that this regional exploitation must cease. I, however, do not blame West Pakistanis for this regional exploitation.

"Thirdly, it is the geographical situation and the unnatural system that is being pursued which are responsible for this injustice. Take only one instance. Had the capital of Pakistan been located in East Pakistan instead of West Pakistan this regional exploitation would have occurred in the reverse way. Sixty-two per cent of our revenue that is being spent on our defence forces, and 32 per cent of our revenue that is being spent on our Central Administration would have all been spent in East Pakistan instead of West Pakistan. The well-known public finance maxim that "the expenditure of the Government is the income of the people and the income of the Government is the expenditure of the people" would have worked in favour of East Pakistan instead of West Pakistan. This 94 per cent of our total revenue which has been annually spent in West Pakistan and thus formed the income of West Pakistan would have in that case been spent in and enriched East Pakistan. The seat of government being in West Pakistan, all the three headquarters of the armed forces and all central institutions and foreign missions have got their head offices in West Pakistan as a matter of course. Consequently, all their spendings are done in that wing. All these spendings would have been in East Pakistan had the seat of government been here. East Pakistan would have been enriched and West Pakistan impoverished to that extent and in that proportion.

"In that event, you, the West Pakistanis, would have made the same demands for regional justice for which you are condemning us, the East Pakistanis, and ascribing all sorts of evil motives. In that case you would have realized that there was no other motive than the motive of self-preservation.

In that context, when West Pakistanis would have made such demands of regional justice, do you know what would have been our attitude? We would have at once conceded that it was your right to demand justice and equality and it was your duty to do so.

"Nay, we would have gone further. We would not have waited for you to make these demands. Instead, we would have met your requirements before you would have demanded them. We really believe in justice, equality and fairplay among brothers. A state is nothing if not a big family. Even in a family, eating by one member does not fill the stomach of another. So how and with what conscience do you call us selfish for demanding our share? What will others call you who are not only enjoying your own share but devouring the share of your brothers also? We are, however, demanding our share only, not yours too. We want to live with you as equal partners, not exploiters.

"Fourthly, if we happen to have more than enough we can even sacrifice something for you from out of our share. We did so in the past. Do you not remember? Please recall:

"(1) In the first Constituent Assembly we had 44 and you had 28 representatives. If we wanted, we could most democratically have brought the capital and headquarters of the three armed forces to East Pakistan. We did not.

"(2) Out of sheer brotherly feeling and sense of equality we elected six West Pakistanis to the Constituent Assembly from East Pakistan by East Pakistani votes.

"(3) By our majority we could have made Bengali our only state language. We, however, demanded and got both Urdu and Bengali.

"(4) By a majority of votes we could have framed a constitution favourable to East Pakistan.

"(5) To remove any possible complex of domination, we sacrificed our majority and accepted parity on your assurance that you would concede parity in all respects.

"Fifthly, the above should be enough to convince West Pakistani brothers that we East Pakistanis are really con-

sumed with a sense of brotherly equality towards you by which we want to live in honour and dignity. That we are capable of making sacrifices for you if you need it has also been proved in the past. Had the capital been in East Pakistan we would have on our own initiative set up a real second capital in West Pakistan, not merely a hoax of a capital. We would never have taken advantage of that vantage position and would not have grabbed all the important offices ourselves. We would not have captured all the high and lucrative posts of West Pakistan like the chairmanships of the Cotton Board, PIDC (Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation), Railway Board... Port Trust and WAPDA (Water and Power Development Authority), etc.

"We would not have thought of capturing the governorship of your wing. On the contrary, we would have equitably distributed the high offices between the people of the two wings; we would have made effective arrangements for spending Central revenues equitably between East and West Pakistan; we would have extended regional and provincial autonomy instead of curtailing [it]. We would never have allowed any disparity to grow between the two wings, either political administrative or economic. We would never have done anything to create any feeling that because we East Pakistanis are in the majority, because the seat of government is here, we are therefore the masters of Pakistan. We would rather have done everything to make you feel that this country belongs to you as well as to us, both in thought and in action. We would have shared state power equally with you.

"We believe that this feeling of absolute equality, sense of inter-wing justice and impartiality is the very basis of Pakistani patriotism. Only he is fit to be a leader of Pakistan who is imbued with and consumed by such patriotism. A leader who sincerely believes that the two wings of Pakistan are really two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, two rows of teeth, two hands and two legs of the body politic of Pakistan, a leader who feels that to make Pakistan healthy and strong one must make each one of these pairs equally healthy and strong,

a leader who earnestly believes that to weaken any one of these limbs is to weaken Pakistan as a whole, a leader who zealously holds that anyone who deliberately or knowingly weakens any limb of Pakistan is an enemy of the country, and a leader who is ready to take strong measures against such enemies, is the only person entitled to claim the national leadership of Pakistan. Pakistan is a magnificent country with an uncommonly wide horizon. To be fit to become its leader one must possess a similarly magnificent heart with an uncommon breadth of vision.

"Sixthly, let me humbly remind my West Pakistani brothers and sisters that when we demanded Bengali to be made one of the two state languages of Pakistan you condemned it as a move to undo Pakistan. When again we demanded joint electorate particularly in the context of parity in representation demanded by you, you condemned our demand to have been inspired from across the border. Both of these two demands have now been accepted; but there has been no undoing of Pakistan due to their acceptance. Does it not put you to shame that every bit of reasonable demand of East Pakistan has got to be secured from you at tremendous cost and after bitter struggle as if snatched from unwilling foreign rulers as a reluctant concession? Does it do you any credit? Please put a stop to such attitude once for all. Please be brothers instead of rulers. In conclusion, I fervently appeal to my countrymen to deeply ponder over the formula put forward by me. They will find that none of the items in my six-point programme is either unjust, impractical or disruptive of the country's integrity. I hope I have succeeded, in the short space of this declaration, in showing that the acceptance of these points will not only weaken Pakistan but will on the contrary make it stronger.

"But the vested interests for obvious reasons will not agree. They have got their own way of judging things. To them only the continuation and the perpetuation of their exploitation mean stability of a society and a state. To them anybody who disturbs or threatens to disturb this process of

exploitation is a traitor and a disrupter. This is neither new nor surprising. Our great forebears like Fazlul Huq and Suhrawardy had to fall victim to such vitriolics.

"In taking up the cause of the exploited masses one must therefore be ready and prepared for such vilification and incarceration. To my lot have fallen many such trials and tribulations in the past. Through the blessings of my superiors, the comradeship of my colleagues and the affectionate support of my countrymen, God in His infinite mercy gave me courage and fortitude enough to withstand those oppressions. With this boundless affection of my countrymen as my asset, I am fully prepared to make any sacrifice in their service. The life of an individual like myself is nothing compared with the salvation of the people of my country.

"I know of no nobler battle than to fight for the rights of the exploited millions. This is the lesson I have learnt at the feet of my political master Suhrawardy. He is no longer in our midst to guide us. But I am determined to live up to that lesson and keep his flag flying. The country is passing through the darkest hour of her life. At such a difficult time the Awami League Council has placed the heavy responsibility of its presidentship on my already overburdened shoulders. But through Allah's mercy I am no shirker. I am not afraid of work. So I have with all humility accepted the great responsibility. I have great faith in my people. I also know that the darkest hour of night is just a harbinger of dawn. My beloved countrymen will only pray to Allah so that He may continue to give me mental strength and physical fitness to devote the rest of my life to fighting for restoration of their rights which have been forcibly snatched away."

APPENDIX 3

The 11-point demands of the East Pakistan Students All-Party Action Committee:

1 (*a*) Restoration of provincialized colleges to their original status.
(*b*) Extension in the number of schools and colleges.
(*c*) Night shift arrangements in provincial colleges.
(*d*) 50 per cent reduction in tuition fees.
(*e*) Bengali as the medium of instruction as well as work in all offices.
(*f*) Hostel charges to be subsidized by 50 per cent.
(*g*) Increase in salaries of teachers.
(*h*) Free and compulsory education up to class VIII.
(*i*) A medical university to be set up and the Medical Council Ordinance to be withdrawn.
(*j*) Facilities for condensed course for polytechnic students.

(*k*) Train and bus concessions.
(*l*) Guarantee of job opportunity.
(*m*) Repeal of the University Ordinance and full autonomy for universities.
(*n*) Repeal of the National Education Commission and Hamoodur Rahman reports.

2 Parliamentary democracy on the basis of universal franchise.

3 (*a*) Federal form of government and sovereign legislature. (*b*) Federal government's powers to be confined to defence, foreign policy and currency.

4 Sub-federation of Baluchistan, North-West Frontier Province and Sind with regional autonomy for each unit.

5 Nationalization of banks, insurance companies and all big industries.

6 Reduction in rates of taxes and revenues on peasants.

7 Fair wages and bonus for workers.

8 Flood control measures for East Pakistan.

9 Withdrawal of all emergency laws, security acts and other prohibitive orders.

10 Quit SEATO, CENTO and Pakistan-US military pacts.

11 Release of all detainees and political prisoners, including those of the Agartala Conspiracy case.

APPENDIX 4

Chronology of the Bengali struggle compiled by the Government of Bangla Desh:

1947

June 20 — Bengal Assembly members by a vote of 56 to 21 decide to partition province.

Aug. 25 — Food situation in East Pakistan serious because of floods.

1948

March 11 — Sheikh Mujibur Rahman arrested while leading language demonstration.

Aug. 14 — Khwaja Nazimuddin, Premier of East Bengal, appointed Governor-General of Pakistan.

1950

Oct. 6 — Aziz-ul-Haq denounced constitution drafting committee's report and said that Premier Liaquat Ali Khan was conspiring to establish his own dictatorship in the garb of the proposed federation.

Nov. 24 Thirteen Bengali members of the Muslim League Assembly Party issued a joint statement and demanded autonomy for East Bengal.

1952

Feb. 21 East Bengal rocked by demonstrations against basic committee report which did not grant official status to the Bengali language. Nineteen students and many others killed in police firings.

1954

March 15 Section 92-A promulgated in East Pakistan on expiry of the Provincial Legislative Assembly.

March 19 United Front led by H.S. Suhrawardy of the Awami League and A. Fazlul Haq of the Krishak Sramik Party won provincial elections with a large majority and formed a government.

May 17 Premier Mohammad Ali describes the East Pakistani disturbances as a "foreign conspiracy."

May 29 Government of United Front dismissed, Governor's rule proclaimed and Iskander Mirza sent to Dacca as Governor of East Bengal.

Aug. 4 Reports of unprecedented floods in East Pakistan. Millions of people affected.

1958

June 24 President's rule enforced in East Pakistan.

Sept. 20 Speaker of Provincial Assembly declared mentally unsound. Deputy Speaker Shahid Ali beaten to death.

Oct. 7 Martial Law imposed in Pakistan. Political parties banned.

Oct. 12 Mujibur Rahman, Maulana Bhashani and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan arrested.

1959

May 8 Mansur Ali, a former Commerce and Industries Minister of East Pakistan, arrested on charges of corruption.

1960

Sept. 12 Mujibur Rahman convicted in Dacca on charge of

	criminal misconduct and sentenced to two years simple imprisonment.
Oct. 10	Twenty-four-hour cyclone hit the coastal belt of East Bengal. More than 3,000 people killed.
Oct. 31	Another cyclone which killed about 20,000 people.
1961	
May 9	East Pakistan again hit by a cyclone which took more than 2,000 human lives.
Sept. 21	Police firing on student demonstrators shouting anti-Ayub slogans in Dacca. Hundreds of students arrested.
Sept. 24	Suhrawardy demanded that democracy be restored.
1962	
April	Anti-Ayub disturbances in East Pakistan. Unarmed people killed. Four Bengali members of the Central Cabinet resigned.
June 9	Martial law lifted. New constitution based on "basic democracy." The people of East Pakistan oppose it.
1966	
February	Mujibur Rahman announced his Six Points for regional autonomy.
March 20	Mujibur Rahman and party workers arrested.
March 27	Four opposition Muslim League leaders arrested in Muzzaffargarh.
June 7	Anti-Ayub demonstrations all over East Bengal. Police firing killed thousands of unarmed people. A general strike called on June 7 to back demand for autonomy developed into rioting in Dacca, Chittagong, Narayanganj and Taragaon.
June 17	Awami League, National Awami Party and Krishak Party and prominent citizens of Dacca, Chittagong and Barisal formulated a six-point programme to form a "shadow government" in East Bengal.
1967	
Feb. 2	Opposition leaders of East Pakistan formed a united

	front to achieve regional autonomy for East Pakistan.
April 27	Mujibur Rahman sentenced to 15-month simple imprisonment for making a "prejudicial speech."
Dec. 3	Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) formed to fight Ayub's dictatorship.
Dec. 17	Shahabuddin report on regional disparities submitted to National Assembly.
1968	
Jan. 5	Students of Dacca University organized an exhibition to highlight disparities between East and West Pakistan.
Jan. 6	Twenty-eight persons, including junior army officers, arrested for allegedly trying to bring about the secession of East Bengal.
Jan. 18	Mujib arrested and implicated in Agartala Conspiracy Case. Charged with trying to establish an independent East Bengal with Indian help.
July 18	Seventeen East Pakistani districts engulfed by cyclone. Thousands of people killed.
Dec. 7	Anti-Ayub demonstrations in Dacca, Chittagong, Jessore and other cities of East Pakistan. Many people killed in police firing and 500 people arrested.
Dec. 14	Police firing in Chittagong, where many were killed. Anti-Ayub movement gathered momentum and led to his fall.
1969	
March 25	President Yahya Khan imposes martial law and dissolves National and Provincial Assemblies.
March 26	Yahya Khan promises to transfer power to the people after "bringing sanity."
March 28	Mujib announces plan for a federal set-up.
March 29	Maulana Bhashani, leader of National Awami Party, interned in his village home at Kagmari.
March 30	Maulana Bhashani demands a national government.
April 10	Yahya Khan pledges to hold elections on the basis of adult franchise.

Nov. 28	Yahya Khan fixes 5 October 1970 for elections to National Assembly.
1970	
Jan. 1	Ban lifted on activities of political parties.
April 1	Yahya Khan orders dissolution of one unit of West Pakistan.
Sept. 2	Elections are postponed until December 7 because of cyclone in East Pakistan.
Dec. 7	Elections to National Assembly completed. Awami League and People's Party of Z.A. Bhutto emerge as major parties in East and West Pakistan respectively.
Dec. 9	Mujib demands that the new constitution be based on his Six Points for regional autonomy.
Dec. 10	Maulana Bhashani calls for an independent and sovereign East Pakistan.
Dec. 12	Three more East Pakistani parties support independence demand.
1971	
Jan. 14	Yahya Khan refers to Mujibur Rahman as Pakistan's future Prime Minister.
Jan. 29	Constitutional talks between Mujibur Rahman and Z.A. Bhutto in Dacca flounder on the autonomy issue.
Feb. 13	Yahya Khan fixes March 3 for inauguration of National Assembly.
Feb. 15	Bhutto threatens to boycott Assembly session if Mujibur Rahman does not accommodate his views on constitution-making.
Feb. 16	Mujibur Rahman elected leader of Awami League Legislative Party.
Feb. 18	Mujibur Rahman declares that Islam would not be used to liquidate Bengali culture.
Feb. 21	Yahya Khan dissolves his cabinet.
Feb. 28	Bhutto seeks postponement of National Assembly inaugural session.
March 1	Yahya Khan postpones Assembly session and sacks

	the East Pakistan Governor, Vice-Admiral S.M. Ashan. Mujibur Rahman calls for general strike in Dacca to protest against postponement of Assembly session.
March 2	Popular resentment erupts in violence in Dacca and some other places. Troops move into action and curfew is imposed.
March 3	Awami League launches a non-violent, non-cooperation movement. Mujibur Rahman rejects Yahya Khan's proposal for a conference of political leaders.
March 5	Three hundred people killed in army action against Awami League volunteers and supporters.
March 6	Yahya Khan announces that National Assembly would meet on March 25.
March 7	Mujibur Rahman asks the people not to pay taxes and asks government servants to take orders from him. Puts forward his four conditions for attending Assembly session. Members of East Bengal Rifles refuse to shoot at Bengali demonstrators.
March 8	Civil disobedience movement is launched.
March 9	East Pakistan judges refuse to swear in Lt.-Gen. Tikka Khan as Governor.
March 14	Central Government issues ultimatum asking workers to return to work by March 15.
March 15	Mujibur Rahman announces unilateral declaration of autonomy, issues 35 directives to East Bengalis. Yahya Khan arrives in Dacca.
March 9	Yahya-Mujib constitutional talks begins.
March 21	Bhutto arrives in Dacca, meets leaders of West Pakistan parties, confers with Yahya Khan. Mujib has an unscheduled meeting with Yahya Khan.
March 22	Yahya Khan again postpones inauguration of National Assembly.
March 25	Awami League indicates that constitutional talks are deadlocked while more army killings are reported. More troops arrive. Yahya, Bhutto and others leave for Rawalpindi. Genocide begins.

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